

G. J. HAMLEN

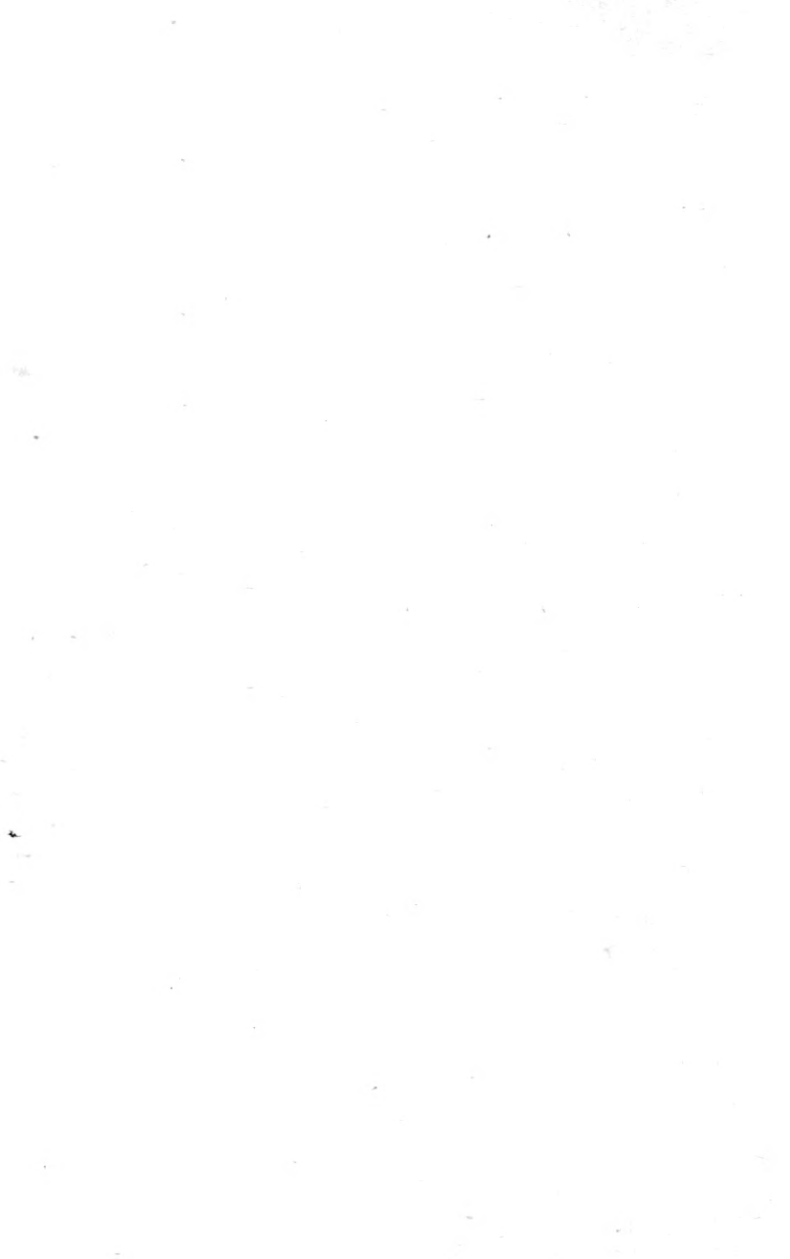


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THE WALDIES

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THE WALDIES: A PLAY IN FOUR
ACTS, BY G. J. HAMLEN

LONDON: SIDGWICK & JACKSON, LTD.
3 ADAM STREET, ADELPHI. MCMXIV.

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THE WALDIES

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS, BY GEO. J. HAMLEN

The People in the Play in the order of their appearance

MRS WALDIE	.	.	.	GWYNNETH GALTON
EUPHEMIA WALDIE	.	.	.	CATHLEEN NESBITT
ALECK WALDIE	.	.	.	PHILIP LESLIE
HANNAH WALDIE	.	.	.	ELLEN O'MALLEY
JOHN WALDIE	.	.	.	CHARLES BIBBY
JEANIE	.	.	.	ETHEL EVANS
JAMES PRITCHARD	.	.	.	ANTHONY WARDE
LESLIE FYFE	.	.	.	EWAN BROOKE
ALLAN ROSS	.	.	.	NORMAN M'KEOWN

The Play produced by Norman Page, to whom the Author is indebted for many valuable suggestions.

First performed by the Incorporated Stage Society, of 36 Southampton Street, Strand, W.C., at the Haymarket Theatre, 8th and 9th December 1912, with the cast and producer given above.

THE WALDIES

ACT I

SCENE : *The dining room in WALDIE'S house.*

The room is furnished in a solid substantial way—dark mahogany furniture of the early Victorian style, comfortable enough, thoroughly serviceable, and in general effect about as cheerful as the coffee room of a second-rate temperance hotel.

The door is on the right, the fireplace in the centre, and two windows on the left. Down from the door is a sideboard; on each side of the fireplace, a roomy arm-chair; between the two windows, a sofa one end of which is pulled out so that it stands at an angle to the wall. A dining table in the centre is set with tea-things for four. On the right of the fire-place, convenient to the door, is a dumb waiter, and on the opposite side, a small table on which there are some magazines, a book or two, and a work-basket. Chairs disposed about the room. A big marble clock of tombstone design in the

centre of the mantelpiece and some ornaments in pairs on each side of it. A few uninteresting pictures on the walls.

MRS WALDIE, HANNAH, EUPHEMIA, and ALECK are seated at the table, finishing their tea. MRS WALDIE is seated at the head of the table with her back to the windows; ALECK, at the foot; EUPHEMIA, facing the audience; HANNAH, opposite, with her back to them. MRS WALDIE is a rather faded woman, still retaining traces of her girlhood's prettiness. HANNAH is intelligent and interesting looking, but with nothing striking about her. Both MRS WALDIE and HANNAH are plainly but not unfashionably dressed, and neither of them wear much jewelry. EUPHEMIA is exceptionally pretty, with considerable superficial charm. She is very smartly dressed and wears a good deal of jewelry, noticeably, a very handsome ring on her engagement finger. ALECK is a loutish, sullen-looking lad, rather running to waistcoat and exaggerated fashion in dress.

MRS W. [*in rather a whine.*] I'm afraid father's not pleased that we're having tea to-night.

EUPH. It does seem rather absurd to upset all the household arrangements just because father's going out.

MRS W. But an early dinner makes it so much easier for the servants, Phemie.

EUPH. Oh, of course if the servants are to be our first consideration——

MRS. W. I didn't say so. But it *is* easier. Besides—I like a nice old-fashioned sit-down tea, and it's so seldom we have one. When I was *your* age, my dear, I never dreamt of having anything else, and——

EUPH. Other times, other manners, I suppose. What a time father takes to dress !

MRS W. I was just wondering if I should go and help him.

EUPH. He'd only snap your nose off if you did.

MRS W. Oh, my dear ! He wouldn't do that.

EUPH. Well, go and see. He has probably lost his stud, or can't tie his necktie, or something. It'll relieve his feelings to have somebody to swear at !

MRS W. Phemie ! That's not the way to speak of your father.

EUPH. Oh, I don't see why we need pretend he's an angel—among ourselves, anyhow. I

do wish he'd hurry up, though. I don't want to be late for the meeting.

MRS W. Oh, my dear ; I don't know what to say about that meeting. I'm sure your father wouldn't approve of it.

EUPH. Very likely not. But I don't see it matters, as we're not going to tell him.

MRS W. I'm so afraid he might find out, and——

EUPH. Nonsense, mother. We shan't start till he's away, and we'll be back long before he is.

MRS W. Only this morning he was speaking of it. He said these revival preachers just work people up into a state of excitement and then have a collection.

EUPH. Of course. No doubt they're as fond of money as the rest of us—father included. But think of the fun, seeing the people “worked up.”

MRS W. [*shocked.*] My dear ! It's a religious meeting.

EUPH. Father says it isn't.

MRS W. And then, there's Leslie. What will he think ?

EUPH. P'ff. I'm not going to consult Leslie's wishes in everything I do. Besides, he's going to the dinner with father, so he'll never know.

MRS W. Oh, my darling; you shouldn't keep things from your future husband.

EUPH. Do you never keep things from father?

MRS W. [*distressed.*] I—I try not to—but——

ALECK. Oh, shut up, Phemie! What's the good of worrying the mater?

EUPH. I'm not.

ALECK. Oh, yes you are. You're always worrying her about something or other. The side you put on since you got engaged to Leslie——

MRS W. Oh, don't squabble, children. Only, it doesn't seem right to take advantage of your father's back being turned—I'm sure it's not often he goes out for an evening's enjoyment——

EUPH. Enjoyment! Fancy father going out to enjoy himself!

EUPHEMIA and ALECK both laugh.

MRS W. But I'm sure men *do* enjoy themselves at these dinners, my dears; although they *are* just given by the—what is it—the Steel Institute, or something.

ALECK. [*laughing.*] How do you spell it, mother?

MRS W. [*puzzled.*] I—I don't know, Aleck.

ALECK. Rather not.

EUPH. Father knows all right. That's why he attends their annual dinner.

HAN. [*getting up suddenly.*] You ought to be ashamed to say such things—both of you.

ALECK. Oh, I say, Hannah; it was only a joke.

EUPH. Father always manages to secure a big order at these dinners—Leslie says so.

HAN. Well, is there anything dishonest in that?

EUPH. Who said anything about dishonesty?

ALECK. [*getting up and going to HANNAH.*] It was only a joke, Hannah; there's no good getting fluffy about it.

EUPH. [*sneering.*] Hannah's so painfully honest herself, of course——

HAN. No, I'm not. We're none of us honest. We do things on the sly—behind father's back—and when we find each other out, we sneer at each other. We're a contemptible family. We're——

ALECK. It's not *our* fault.

HAN. Oh, I know it's because we're all afraid of father.

EUPH. We're not—at least, I'm not.

ALECK. Oh, yes you are. Of course you're in his good books, just now because you've got

engaged to Leslie. You always were his favourite, anyhow.

EUPH. I'm not the least afraid of him.

HAN. Then why don't you tell him you're going to that revival meeting to-night ?

EUPH. Because I don't choose to.

ALECK. Because you jolly well know he'd put his foot on it, and you're afraid to.

EUPH. I'm not. I *will* tell him—so there !

HAN. [*to MRS WALDIE.*] That will set *your* mind at rest, mother. Phemie won't be going out, after all.

EUPH. Oh, shan't I ?

MRS W. Children, children ; don't say such unkind things. Why can't we all be quite happy together, and have a nice pleasant evening at home ?

ALECK. Oh, Lord !

EUPH. Thanks. I prefer something less violently hilarious.

MRS W. But Phemie——

The door opens. A hush falls upon them all at once. WALDIE comes in. He is a shrewd business man, who has risen from the ranks. He is in evening dress, but his necktie is untied and hanging down the front of his shirt. He is in a very bad temper.]

WALD. [*irritably.*] One of you girls come and tie this tie for me.

EUPH. [*jumping up eagerly.*] Let me, father.

EUPHEMIA *begins fixing WALDIE'S tie.*

HANNAH *sits down by the fire.*

MRS W. [*timidly.*] Oh, John; I ought to have gone to help you.

She gets up.

WALD. A bit late in thinking of it, aren't you?

MRS W. I—I didn't know whether you'd like it or not.

EUPH. [*playfully.*] I can't fix your tie, father, if you don't stand still.

WALD. I *am* standing still.

MRS WALDIE *goes out.*

EUPH. You ought to dress for dinner every night, father; then you wouldn't find it such a bother when you're going out.

WALD. Pooh, nonsense; I don't lay myself out to be a dandy.

EUPH. Of course not. But people *do* judge us pretty much by what we wear, don't they? If a man's not well dressed, they think he's not solvent.

WALD. There's something in that.

EUPH. Of course there is. You know, Leslie

says a wife can be of the greatest help to her husband just by looking smart, and making herself agreeable to the right people. That's why I promised Mrs Gardner to go to one of these old meetings—just to please her, you know.

WALD. [*smiling.*] What meetings?

EUPH. [*finishing his tie.*] There, that's all right. Oh, one of those tiresome revival meetings. It's a man, Ross, who's conducting them, I think.

WALD. [*angrily.*] Go to one of these meetings! Nothing of the kind. I won't have a daughter of mine going to them.

EUPH. Oh, do you think I shouldn't? I don't want to, of course; but I thought, when Mrs Gardner asked me so particularly—the Gardners have so much influence, and Leslie says it's so important to be on good terms with them.

WALD. (*weakening.*) Does Mrs Gardner go to them?

EUPH. Oh, yes; I think she's rather taken the man up.

WALD. Well—if she wants you to go with her——

EUPH. [*with a pretty air of dismay.*] Oh, father! I don't want to go with Mrs Gardner!

I should have to sit the whole thing out. I thought I'd just go some time, by myself. Then I could just stay long enough to say I'd been.

WALD. [*shaking his head and smiling.*] You've got a business head on you, Phemie.

EUPH. Well—it's inherited, I suppose.

WALD. [*pleased.*] When are you going?

EUPH. I don't know. [*With sudden thought.*] Why not to-night? Leslie won't be here. Perhaps Aleck could go with me?

ALECK. [*annoyed.*] Oh, rot, Phemie. I've got my work to do.

WALD. [*sternly.*] Surely you can let your work stand for one night, to oblige your sister! You can get up an hour or so earlier to-morrow, and make up for it.

EUPH. We shan't be long, Aleck. We'll just pop in and out again.

WALD. [*to ALECK.*] Of course you'll go. I saw that man I told you about, this afternoon. He's coming next week to coach you—a couple of hours every night—that'll be a help, won't it? More than I ever had, I can tell you.

ALECK. [*ungraciously.*] I don't need a coach.

WALD. Oh, that's the way with all you conceited young fellows—think you know every-

thing. You'll be glad of him before a month is out.

MRS WALDIE *comes back with WALDIE'S overcoat. ALECK turns away sulkily.*

MRS W. [*timidly.*] I brought your coat, father.

WALD. Time I was off, eh ?

MRS W. The cab's been waiting some time.

MRS WALDIE *helps him into his coat.*

WALD. Beastly nuisance, these dinners. But it pays to go to them. [*to ALECK.*] When you get a bit older, Aleck ; I'll hand over that part of the business to you. Good-bye, Mary. [*he kisses her quickly.*] Good-bye, girls.

WALDIE *goes out, followed by MRS WALDIE. Directly the door is closed, EUPHEMIA clasps her hands and dances up to HANNAH triumphantly.*

EUPH. Now, who's afraid ?

HAN. [*getting up and looking at EUPHEMIA rather contemptuously.*] I suppose you really do feel rather proud of yourself ?

EUPH. [*defiantly.*] Well, why not ? I've got what I wanted.

HAN. Yes, you've got that. I suppose you think the end justifies the means.

EUPH. I think you're jealous because you cant' get things out of father, yourself.

HAN. I certainly can't.

EUPH. Oh, you needn't pretend to be superior ! It's just that you don't know how to get round a man, and I do.

HAN. Very likely. I think I prefer not to know.

EUPH. So that you can put on airs. But, if you don't get things out of father, you keep things from him, and that's just as bad.

ALECK. Oh, shut up, Phemie. Hannah may be a silly ass, but she's not a beastly little sneak.

EUPH. Of course *you* stick up for Hannah, because she gets money for you.

HAN. [*startled.*] How do *you* know ?

EUPH. Oh, I'm not so blind as you all seem to think.

ALECK. [*hastily.*] Look here, if we're going to this beastly meeting, you'd better be getting on your things.

EUPH. You're in a great hurry, now.

ALECK. No, I'm not. I think it was beastly low of you to drag me into it. But seeing we've got to go——

EUPH. [*laughing.*] Just think of father *ordering* us to go ; and only this morning he said

“all these revival fellows were scamps and swindlers !”

HAN. Think of your telling him that Mrs Gardner attended the meetings.

EUPH. She's been there twice. Marjory Fyfe told me.

HAN. I don't see what you want to go for. It's not the least in your line.

MRS WALDIE *comes back.*

EUPH. They say it's great fun. The people get excited and yell Hallelujah, and Amen.

She sings a snatch of a revival hymn.

MRS W. My dear Phemie ; I wish you wouldn't ! It sounds so irreverent.

EUPH. [*laughing.*] All right, mother. I'll go and get ready.

EUPHEMIA *goes out.*

MRS W. [*to HANNAH.*] My dear, have you never rung the bell ? Jeanie will be waiting to clear the table.

HAN. I quite forgot.

She rings the bell and begins collecting the tea-things together.

MRS W. I can't think what's come over Phemie, to go to a revival meeting !

HAN. Oh, it's a new form of excitement, I suppose.

MRS W. Oh, but my dear ; I hope she won't get excited, because your father says——

HAN. I don't think you need worry, mother. Phemie is quite able to take care of herself.

MRS W. I'm afraid Leslie won't like it.

HAN. Not if Mrs Gardner's in the habit of going ?

MRS W. Oh, my dear ; of course that's what Phemie told your father, but——

HAN. [*with a short laugh.*] But it doesn't take *you* in ! Isn't it strange that a shrewd man like father doesn't see it too ?

MRS W. She's got such taking ways, and she always was father's favourite—except Aleck, of course.

ALECK. [*astonished.*] Me !

MRS W. Of course, dear. Father's so proud of you——

ALECK. He's got a jolly queer way of showing it, then.

HAN. It's because he's so anxious to see you get on.

ALECK. Rot ! It's because he's such a beastly tyrant he hates to see a fellow enjoying himself.

MRS W. Oh, my dear ; it's not that.

ALECK. Why doesn't he let me play cricket and football, then, the same as other fellows ?

MRS W. It's just he—he doesn't think it's good for you.

ALECK. Hates to see a fellow enjoy himself. That's more like it.

JEANIE *comes in with a tray. She and HANNAH clear the table. MRS WALDIE picks up her knitting and sits on the sofa. ALECK stands in front of the fire and lights a cigarette.*

MRS W. You'll take good care of Phemie, won't you, Aleck? I'm so afraid there will be a lot of rough people at the meeting.

ALECK. We'll be all right, mother. I'll get her home as soon as I can.

MRS W. Yes, do, dear.

JEANIE *and HANNAH carry out the tea-things.*

Directly they have gone, ALECK goes to MRS WALDIE.

ALECK. [*hesitating.*] I say, mother; I want to ask you something.

MRS W. [*looking up with a smile.*] What is it, Aleck?

ALECK. [*blurring it out.*] Can you let me have five pounds?

MRS W. [*dismayed.*] Again! I gave you five pounds last week.

ALECK. Oh, I know, mother; but I want another five. I must have it—or—— [*he stops.*]

MRS W. Aleck! You've got into another scrape!

ALECK. No, I haven't, mother. I mean—it's not my fault. If I can't raise five pounds at once, father will hear of it, and you know what that means.

MRS W. Oh, my dear boy; you promised faithfully you wouldn't do it again.

ALECK. Neither I have, mother. I tell you, I can't help it. I owe a man some money, that's all; and he says if I don't pay up, he'll go to father for it.

MRS W. But I must have money for the house-keeping, Aleck. I can't ask father for more.

ALECK. You can easily get tick, mother.

MRS W. But I gave you five pounds last week.

ALECK. Oh, I know you did; but I must have another. If it's going to save us all from a shindy, mother—— [*He pauses.*]

MRS W. When must you have it?

ALECK. To-morrow will do. Oh, I say, mater, it *is* decent of you, and I swear this time shall be the last——

EUPHEMIA *comes back dressed for going out.* ALECK *hastily draws away from*

MRS WALDIE.

EUPH. Are you ready, Aleck?

ALECK. Yes.

EUPH. Good-bye, mother. [*She kisses her.*]
Come along, Aleck. Come with me and get
salvation. [*She sings again.*]

MRS W. I wish you wouldn't, Phemie.

EUPH. Oh, I forgot. Good-bye, mother.

ALECK and EUPHEMIA go out. MRS WALDIE
lets her work drop in her lap and sits in
anxious thought. HANNAH comes back.]

HAN. Well, they've gone, mother.

MRS W. Yes, dear. [*She suddenly chokes
back a sob.*]

HAN. [*running to her in surprise.*] Mother
dear, what's the matter?

MRS W. It's Aleck, Hannah. He wants five
pounds.

HAN. Mother! What is it this time?

MRS W. I don't know, my dear. He says if
he hasn't got five pounds to-morrow the man's
going to your father to tell him everything.

HAN. What man?

MRS W. I don't know. I don't know anything
about it. He owes the man five pounds. Isn't
that enough?

HAN. But mother—who is the man? How
does Aleck come to owe him money? Didn't
you ask him?

MRS W. There wasn't time. Besides, what good would it have done? It would probably only worry us more, if we knew. But I don't know what to do. I haven't got five pounds. I daren't ask your father for more—at least—I suppose I'll have to, but—oh, Hannah; what can I do?

HAN. [*grimly.*] Nothing, mother.

MRS W. Oh, don't say that, because I must do something. If the man went to your father there'd be a terrible scene. Have you—haven't you got any money yourself, Hannah?

HAN. I have a few pounds, but——

MRS W. Oh, my darling; if you have two or three pounds, I can manage to scrape up the rest.

HAN. [*firmly.*] I'm not going to give it to Aleck, mother.

MRS W. Oh, but you must! I know it's hard on you to have to give up your few pounds; but for Aleck's sake—and mine. You've always been so unselfish——

HAN. I haven't. I didn't give him the money before because I was unselfish. It was because it was the easiest way. It's not good for Aleck—it's not fair to him—to go on screening him like this.

MRS W. But your father's so hard on poor Aleck. If he found out he'd been——

HAN. He's bound to find out, sooner or later.

MRS W. Oh, no, my dear. Aleck has promised faithfully he'll never get into debt again, if only——

HAN. He promised faithfully the last time too. That was a month ago. We can't go on paying his debts for ever.

MRS W. You're so hard on poor Aleck—nearly as hard as your father.

HAN. Hard! Haven't I always helped to screen him, paid his debts, hidden him away when he was tipsy, invented excuses for him? He always promises to do better, but he never keeps his word. No sooner is he out of one scrape than he's into another.

MRS W. But it isn't another, this time. I think it's the same debt he got money for last week.

HAN. Last week! Did you give him money last week?

MRS W. Oh, my dear; it isn't his fault. He does his best.

HAN. It's not altogether *his* fault. If he'd been allowed wholesome amusements perhaps he wouldn't have taken to vicious ones on the

sly. But father doesn't know that ; and how is he ever to know, if we hide it from him ? It's not father's fault—it's yours, mother ; and mine.

MRS W. [*bursting into tears.*] How unkind of you, Hannah. How unfeeling. Your father doesn't understand poor Aleck, and we *must* do what we can for him. [*She pauses for a reply, but getting none, goes on.*] Don't you see that it's the only thing ?

HAN. No, mother. Father must be told.

MRS W. [*alarmed.*] But I promised I wouldn't.

HAN. Aleck must tell father himself.

MRS W. He'll never do that—he's too afraid. And if he did, your father would do something dreadful—send him away, or something.

HAN. Well—even so—perhaps it would be best.

MRS W. But I'm his mother, Hannah—and it's only five pounds.

HAN. How do you know ? I wish you'd asked him more about it.

MRS W. He only asked for five.

HAN. Did he say that was all he owed ?

MRS W. I don't know— [*eagerly.*] He said this time would be the last.

HAN. Oh, he always says that.

JEANIE *opens the door. She has a salver with a card on it. MRS WALDIE picks up her knitting hastily. HANNAH walks to the fire and stands looking into it. JEANIE crosses to MRS WALDIE.*

JEAN. Please ma'am, there's a gentleman to see the master.

MRS W. Didn't you tell him he was out ?

JEAN. Yes ; but he said perhaps you'd see him instead.

MRS W. [*looking at the card.*] James Pritchard. I wonder who—— [*She stops suddenly.*] Show the gentleman in, Jeanie.

JEAN. Yes, ma'am.

JEANIE *goes out.*

MRS W. Hannah ! If this is the man !

HAN. I was just wondering.

MRS W. Oh, I'm so thankful your father is out.

JEANIE *opens the door and admits PRITCHARD. He is a tall gentlemanly-looking man, with a suggestion of the military about him. His manners are a little too good. He comes in bowing and smiling apologetically. MRS WALDIE rises to receive him. HANNAH remains standing at the fire, giving merely the slightest bow in response to PRITCHARD'S.]*

PRIT. [*advancing to MRS WALDIE.*] Mrs Waldie, I presume ?

MRS W. [*nervously.*] Yes—er—won't you sit down ?

PRIT. Thank you. [*He sits down near the table. MRS WALDIE returns to the sofa.*] I must apologize for thrusting myself upon you in this unceremonious way. But I hoped to find Mr Waldie at home, and——

MRS W. My husband won't be home till late.

PRIT. [*smiling.*] Pardon me ; I meant your son.

MRS W. [*anxiously.*] You—you know my son ?

PRIT. Oh, yes. Aleck and I are great friends.

MRS W. [*eagerly.*] Friends ? Then you are not—— [*She stops.*]

PRIT. [*blandly.*] Not ? May I ask—who ?

MRS W. Oh, I thought perhaps you were—— I think I'd rather not say.

PRIT. Perhaps Aleck has mentioned my name to you ?

MRS W. No, never.

PRIT. I thought, perhaps, he might. We've been so very friendly, you know.

MRS W. Isn't my son rather—rather young, to be a very intimate friend of yours ?

PRIT. Perhaps. On the other hand, to a man of the world like myself, there is something very engaging in the whole-hearted enthusiasm of youth.

MRS W. You speak so nicely. I'm sure you don't wish my son any ill ?

PRIT. [*shocked at the idea.*] Not at all ! Not at all, my dear Mrs Waldie.

MRS W. I'm so glad. I—you're a friend of my son's, so I don't mind saying it to you. I'm afraid Aleck has been very—indiscreet.

PRIT. Indeed ?

MRS W. I mean—foolish in many ways.

PRIT. Oh, youth must have its fling, Mrs Waldie. You can't put an old head on young shoulders.

MRS W. That's what I say. But I'm afraid my poor Aleck has run into debt.

PRIT. [*frowning.*] Dear me ; I'm sorry to hear that—because——

MRS W. Because what ?

PRIT. I'm afraid I've been rather indiscreet, myself.

MRS W. In what way ? [PRITCHARD *shrugs*

his shoulders.] You mean you—you've lent him money ?

PRIT. Well—I've accommodated him. It's rather serious. I'm not a rich man, Mrs Waldie. I can't afford to stand out of my money very long.

MRS W. Oh, it's terrible, terrible. I hope my son doesn't owe you much.

PRIT. Oh, no. The merest trifle—that is, the merest trifle to *you*. But it's a serious matter to me.

MRS W. How much ?

PRIT. Oh, I'm half-ashamed to confess how little. A matter of thirty pounds, or thereabouts.

MRS W. (*aghast.*) Thirty pounds !

PRIT. Thirty-seven pounds thirteen and six, to be exact.

MRS W. Thirty-seven pounds, and he only asked for five !

PRIT. Ah ! He has broached the subject to you, then ?

MRS W. He said he owed a man money ; but I'd no idea it was so much !

PRIT. Tut, tut, Mrs Waldie. What is thirty pounds to a man in your husband's position ?

MRS W. But you don't understand. I daren't tell my husband.

HAN. [*suddenly.*] Mother ; I think Mr Pritchard *quite* understands.

PRIT. [*turning to HANNAH.*] Ah !

HAN. You say you "accommodated" my brother. What do you mean by that ?

PRIT. [*suavely.*] Simply that I accommodated him, Miss Waldie. When gentlemen incur—er—debts of honour, they haven't always the necessary cash in their pockets to settle promptly. In such cases, a friend may accept an IOU——

HAN. I see. Having fleeced my brother you——

PRIT. [*rising with dignity.*] Really, Miss Waldie. I cannot allow you to apply such an expression to me.

HAN. I say, having fleeced my brother, you now come to his mother and sister for the money.

PRIT. Pardon me. My coming to you was the merest accident. How was I to know you were alone to-night ?

HAN. Did you expect to see my father ?

PRIT. I have already explained. I called to see your brother.

HAN. Knowing that my father was out.

PRIT. (*with a shrug.*) I may have known there was a dinner on to-night.

HAN. Exactly. You counted on having to deal with my brother—a boy of eighteen—and some inexperienced women.

PRIT. If you'd rather I went to your father——

MRS W. [*agitated.*] Oh, no, no, no! We'll pay you every penny, Mr Pritchard, if you'll only give us time.

HAN. Mother!

PRIT. [*turning quickly to MRS WALDIE.*] You quite misunderstand me, Mrs Waldie. I don't want to be unpleasant. You shall have every consideration. But——

MRS W. Oh, thank you, thank you——

PRIT. But, unfortunately, I am in pressing need of a few pounds just at the moment.

MRS W. Will five pounds do? You shall have it to-morrow, without fail.

PRIT. I'm very sorry; but I must have it to-night.

MRS W. But I haven't got as much! [*With sudden remembrance.*] You said you had two or three pounds, Hannah. Between the two of us, surely we can make it up. I'll go and see. [*She walks toward the door.*]

HAN. Wait a minute, mother. [*She rings the bell.*]

PRIT. [*quickly.*] What did you ring the bell for ?

HAN. For the maid to show you out.

MRS W. Hannah, are you mad ?

PRIT. [*to HANNAH.*] I suppose you know what this means—to your brother ?

HAN. Perfectly. I also know what it means—to you.

PRIT. You force me to go to your father.

MRS W. Oh, Hannah, what have you done ! Give me a little time, Mr Pritchard.

PRIT. I'm afraid I can't. Your daughter has left no other course open to me.

HAN. I'm glad you see that.

PRIT. If you think I'm going to let this thing drop——

HAN. I think you are going to arrange it—with my father.

MRS W. Hannah——

JEANIE *comes to the door.*

HAN. Oh, Jeanie ; please show this—gentleman—out.

After a moment's hesitation PRITCHARD *goes out, JEANIE following. Directly the*

door closes, HANNAH runs to MRS WALDIE in trembling agitation.]

HAN. Oh, mother, mother; I was so frightened of him.

MRS W. [*turning away angrily.*] You've ruined your brother! [*Tearfully.*] Oh, my poor, poor Aleck.

HAN. But mother! What else could I do?

MRS W. You should have been nice to him. He was quite willing to be agreeable until you insulted him.

HAN. But we couldn't go on paying him money for ever.

MRS W. We wouldn't have been long paying the whole thirty-seven pounds.

HAN. You don't suppose it would have ended there!

MRS W. What else could have happened? But now you've made him angry, and he's sure to go to your father.

HAN. He'll not get a penny from him.

MRS W. Oh, my dear, as if the money mattered! It's Aleck we've to think of; and you know how hard your father will be. Oh, what can we do, what can we do!

HAN. There's only one thing. Aleck must tell father—first.

MRS WALDIE *sits down and bursts into tears.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE : *Same as Act I. A few hours later.*

At one end of the table are set out the necessities for a light supper : bread, butter, biscuits, fruit, and milk. MRS WALDIE is sitting in an easy-chair, knitting. HANNAH is seated at the table, sewing.]

MRS W. [*dropping her hands in her lap.*] What can have come over Phemie and Aleck ? They ought to have been home long before this.

HAN. [*wearily.*] I don't know, mother.

MRS W. But the meeting can't be going on all this time.

HAN. I shouldn't think so.

MRS W. [*jumping up.*] Well, where are they ? I can't think what's come over you to-night, Hannah. [*reproachfully.*] You've always been such a help to me.

HAN. [*soothingly.*] Mother dear ; I can't possibly tell where they are.

MRS W. But what do you think? Can't you say something comforting?

HAN. They said they were going to the revival meeting.

MRS W. You know very well that Phemie would say anything.

HAN. They can't be much longer now, mother. We can only wait till they come back.

MRS W. Yes; but that's what is so terrible about it. We can only wait; and if your father gets home first, he won't be pleased, and it'll make him harder than ever with poor Aleck. Oh, Hannah, what can we do? Can't you think of anything?

HAN. I'm sorry, mother. We can only wait.

MRS W. Oh, if you'd only been nicer to that man! Phemie would have managed him better. There's a cab now! [*She runs to the window and peers out through the blind.*] It's your father, Hannah—and a man——

HAN. [*springing up.*] Not—him!

MRS W. [*coming forward in dismay.*] It's Leslie!

HAN. [*with a gasp of relief.*] Oh, I'm so glad.

MRS W. But what's Leslie coming for—at this hour?

HAN. I suppose he thought he'd look in for a few minutes to see Phemie.

MRS W. It's nearly half-past ten—and Phemie not here.

MRS WALDIE *returns to her chair and resumes her knitting.* HANNAH *goes back to her chair and her sewing.* WALDIE and LESLIE FYFE *come in.* *The latter is a good-looking young man of a commonplace type.*

HAN. [*shaking hands with LESLIE.*] We didn't expect to see you to-night.

LESLIE *goes to MRS WALDIE and kisses her.*

WALD. [*looking round.*] Where's Phemie?

HAN. They're not back yet, father.

WALD. Not back!

MRS W. [*anxiously.*] They were very late in starting.

LESLIE. Oh, I say, you know; there's a pretty rough crowd go to these meetings. Perhaps I'd better go and——

HAN. She'll be quite safe, Leslie. Aleck's with her.

WALD. I shouldn't have let her go. Leslie tells me the man's a scamp. But when Mrs Gardner had asked her——

LESLIE. I can't think why Mrs Gardner did.

She said she'd have nothing to do with the meetings when I told her who Ross was.

MRS W. Perhaps she had asked Phemie, before.

LESLIE. I suppose so. But she ought to have told her after.

HAN. Who is Ross ?

LESLIE. Oh, he was at college when I was. He was sent down—for stealing.

MRS W. Stealing !

WALD. That's the man your daughter's gone to listen to.

MRS W. How dreadful ! Only she didn't go to listen to him. She said he worked the people into a state of excitement to get money out of them, and it would be fun to see.

WALD. [*with a short laugh.*] That's Phemie all over ! He won't work much out of her.

LESLIE. Oh, but I say, you know ; lots of quite nice people are taking an interest in these meetings. It's not a place where you can go and laugh. Some of them wouldn't like it, you know.

MRS W. I'm sure Phemie won't do anything you wouldn't like, Leslie. She's always most particular—in public.

WALD. Don't be afraid, my boy. Phemie's

head is screwed on the right way. She'll enjoy the fun, but she won't give herself away.

LESLIE. I wish she hadn't gone.

WALD. And I wish she'd come back. [*The outer door is heard to shut.*] Ah, there they are. We'll hear all about it, now.

HANNAH *walks to the fireplace and sits down opposite* MRS WALDIE. EUPHEMIA *and* ALECK *come in. ALECK shuts the door and stands near it, looking worried. EUPHEMIA is flushed and excited and her jewelry has all disappeared. She goes to* LESLIE, *nervously.*

EUPH. Leslie! You here!

LESLIE. We were all feeling quite anxious about you. [*He kisses her.*] What kept you so late, dear?

WALD. We want to hear all about the working up.

EUPH. [*puzzled.*] The working up?

WALD. The fun. Mother told us you'd gone to see the people worked out of their money.

EUPH. I—I believe I did say something like that! It seems impossible, now.

LESLIE. Why, Phemie; what's the matter?

EUPH. [*breathlessly.*] Oh, Leslie; everything's so different. At least—I suppose

everything's the same. It's I who have changed.

LESLIE. Changed ?

EUPH. Yes. A—a new spirit has taken possession of me. Oh, don't you understand ?

WALD. Good Heavens ! What's the matter ?

EUPH. Oh, father, I'm going to lead a new life. I told you a story to-night. Mrs Gardner didn't ask me to go to the meeting. But I'm so glad I went—so glad—so glad. [*She puts her hands on WALDIE'S shoulders ; he draws back, almost frightened.*]

WALD. Good God !

EUPH. Father—I'm saved ! [*He stares at her, speechless. She turns to MRS WALDIE.*] Mother !

MRS W. [*alarmed.*] My dear, I never dreamt of such a thing.

WALD. What on earth's come over the girl ? [*Turning sharply on ALECK.*] Are you saved too ?

ALECK. [*sullenly.*] No.

WALD. Well, that's something to be thankful for.

LESLIE. [*going to EUPHEMIA.*] My darling girl——

EUPH. [*craving sympathy.*] Oh, Leslie ! You do understand, don't you ?

LESLIE. You're overwrought and excited, Phemie. You'll be all right when you've had time to cool off.

EUPH. [*drawing away.*] Leslie!

LESLIE. [*catching her by both hands.*] Phemie dearest; don't think I'm finding fault with you. I know what it is to be in the middle of an excited crowd. [*He makes to kiss her hand.*] Hello! Where's your ring?

EUPH. Leslie—I——

LESLIE. Some one must have stolen it.

EUPH. No. I gave it to the Lord.

LESLIE. [*startled.*] What?

WALD. Who did you give it to?

EUPH. The Lord. Oh, won't you understand—none of you? I'm going to lead a new life. I'm going to put away all the old things, and cling to that which is good——

WALD. The girl's off her head.

HAN. [*coming forward.*] Phemie—I think I understand—a little.

EUPH. Oh, Hannah!

She throws herself, sobbing, into HANNAH'S arms. HANNAH takes her over to the fire and soothes her, keeping an ear open to what the others are saying as she does so.

WALD. [*turning to ALECK.*] Is this the way

you look after your sister? What have you been letting her do?

ALECK. [*sullenly.*] It wasn't my fault.

WALD. And I say it was.

LESLIE. [*laying his hand on WALDIE'S shoulder.*] Let's find out something about it first. [*to ALECK.*] Aleck, old man; tell us all you can.

ALECK. Oh, I wish we'd never gone to the beastly meeting. I didn't want to.

LESLIE. Yes; but what did they do?

ALECK. Oh, they sang a bit, and old Finlay of St Oswald's gave an address——

WALD. Mr Finlay? Was he there?

ALECK. Yes, and two more of them. It was all right till Ross began to speak. Then Phemie got excited; I couldn't help it. At the finish, they asked all those who felt concerned about their souls to remain behind. I wanted to clear, but Phemie wouldn't. She ran to the front, so of course I had to hang on. They talked and prayed, and Phemie made a show of herself. One of the parsons came to me, but I wasn't having any.

LESLIE. How long did this go on?

ALECK. Oh, until everybody had gone except Phemie, Ross, and me.

LESLIE. I see. And she gave Ross her ring, then ?

ALECK. No, she didn't. It was when we were going out. There was an infernal plate at the door, and before I knew what she was up to, she whacked off all her jewelry, and dumped it in the plate. I wanted to take it out again, but she wouldn't let me. I knew there'd be a jolly row when we got home, but it wasn't my fault.

LESLIE. Where was Ross when you were going out ?

ALECK. At the other end of the hall, putting out the lights. Phemie wanted to wait for him, but I wouldn't let her.

WALD. H'm ; this Ross seems to be a clever rogue. He's kept himself well on the safe side of the law. But I think I'll call on him, to-morrow, all the same.

EUPH. [*jumping up indignantly.*] Father, he's not a rogue at all.

WALD. He's got your ring, though.

EUPH. I gave it him—I mean—I put it in the plate because I had no money with me.

LESLIE. Look here, Phemie, the man *is* a rogue. He was caught stealing when he was at college. I saw it myself.

EUPH. [*staggered.*] Leslie !

HAN. [*putting her arm round PHEMIE.*]
Whatever he is, he has led Phemie to tell the truth. That's not a rogue's work.

WALD. Pooh, nonsense ; do you think it's a miracle for your sister to tell the truth ?
[JEANIE opens the door.] What is it, Jeanie ?

JEAN. Mr Ross would like to see Miss Phemie, sir.

EUPH. [*startled.*] Is he there ? [*She goes toward the door.*]

WALD. Sit down, Phemie. [*To JEANIE.*]
Bring the man in here.

JEANIE goes out again.

EUPH. [*alarmed.*] Father ; you're not to be rude to him.

WALD. [*impatiently.*] Just leave this to me, Phemie.

EUPH. [*appealing.*] Leslie !

LESLIE. It's all right, Phemie. There's nothing to worry about.

JEANIE admits ALLAN ROSS. *He is a frank, pleasant-looking young man with a serious and earnest manner. He is not in clerical dress, but his black suit, stand up collar, and soft felt hat give him rather a clerical appearance. He has a small parcel in*

*his hand that has been hastily bundled up.
He perceives at once that the air is electrical
and stands looking round enquiringly.*

WALD. [*brusquely.*] Well, sir ?

ROSS. Are you Mr Waldie ?

WALD. Yes.

ROSS. You must excuse my coming so late, but I didn't like the idea of keeping this jewelry in my lodgings over night. Your daughter put it in the plate, but I thought, perhaps, she was—over excited.

WALD. [*taken aback.*] You've brought it back !

ROSS. [*looking from WALDIE to EUPHEMIA.*] Yes—should I not ? I wasn't sure——

EUPH. [*triumphantly.*] Oh, Mr Ross ; I'm so glad ! [*She takes the parcel from him.*] I can't tell you how glad I am.

ROSS. [*rather ruefully, but with a pleasant smile.*] I'm glad too. I'm afraid, sometimes, people put money in the plate on the spur of the moment and regret it afterwards. I had a case the other day, and I made up my mind there should never be another.

EUPH. Oh, but it's not that with me, Mr Ross—only—I'm glad you brought it back.

WALD. [*a little shamefaced.*] Won't you sit down, Mr Ross ?

ROSS. [*hesitating.*] I'm afraid it's rather late.

WALD. Not at all. [*to MRS WALDIE.*] Can't you offer Mr Ross a bite of supper, mother ?

MRS W. [*rising nervously.*] We'll be very pleased. I'm afraid there's not much to offer any one, but if you'll just take what we have——

ROSS. Please don't trouble on my account, Mrs Waldie. I really can't stay more than a few minutes. My landlady will be wondering what's become of me.

MRS W. [*relieved.*] Well, if you'd rather not. I expect you're very tired.

ROSS. [*smiling.*] I am, a little.

WALD. Sit down, then.

ROSS *sits on the sofa.* MRS WALDIE *sits near him and WALDIE stands.* *In the meantime, EUPHEMIA has taken the parcel to the table and begins to open it. ALECK nudges her.*

ALECK. [*in a low voice.*] You needn't be in such a beastly hurry, Phemie. Wait till he's gone, can't you.

EUPHEMIA *pushes the parcel away from her.*

ALECK *goes to the fire.* LESLIE *turns to EUPHEMIA.*

LESLIE. Rubbish ! Never mind Aleck. Get out your ring and put it on again.

EUPH. [*smiling at LESLIE.*] Shall I ?

LESLIE. Of course.

EUPHEMIA starts opening the parcel again, LESLIE standing beside her. ALECK stands in front of the fire, HANNAH still sitting in the chair near him. She looks at EUPHEMIA as she opens the parcel.

WALD. [*to ROSS.*] Don't you think you're—well—mistaken, playing so much upon people's feelings at your meetings—working them up into such a state of excitement ?

ROSS. But I don't. I mean, I don't lay myself out to. I always try to appeal to their reason rather than their emotions.

WALD. [*incredulously.*] Judging from the state my daughter was in when she came home to-night——

ROSS. Yes ; I know she was greatly moved. You must bear in mind she had just passed through a great crisis. I tried to calm her as much as I could when I was speaking to her afterwards——

WALD. I'm afraid you're less successful in that than in the other thing.

ROSS. It's difficult to know just how far to go.

Too much cold-blooded reason might be like pouring water on a newly kindled fire. I don't think you quite realize the responsibility that lies on a minister of the gospel.

WALD. [*drily.*] Perhaps not.

WALDIE *turns away from ROSS. As he does so, EUPHEMIA, who has opened the parcel, gives a little exclamation of disappointment.*

EUPH. Leslie—it isn't here!

LESLIE. Not there! Perhaps you've missed it.

EUPH. I don't think so.

They both look through the various pieces of jewelry. ALECK turns his back and stares into the fire. WALDIE, seeing that something is wrong, goes toward them.

WALD. What's the matter?

EUPH. [*quickly.*] Oh, nothing, father.

LESLIE. It's Phemie's ring.

EUPH. Never mind, Leslie.

WALD. What about the ring?

LESLIE. It isn't here, that's all.

WALDIE *starts and glances suspiciously at ROSS.*

EUPH. It must have dropped on the floor, father.

EUPHEMIA *looks about on the floor.* HANNAH

sits up straight and looks at them. ALECK turns round with an evident effort, but does not come forward. ROSS, who has been talking to MRS WALDIE, seeing that something is wrong, gets up and goes toward them.

ROSS. Is anything wrong ?

WALD. [*looking hard at ROSS.*] Yes. My daughter's ring is missing.

ROSS. I saw it there ; a gold ring with a little heart on it.

WALD. We are speaking of the other one—the diamond ring, Mr Ross.

ROSS. [*starting.*] I didn't see a diamond ring. I'm sure there wasn't one.

EUPH. [*impulsively.*] Oh, but there was, Mr Ross.

ROSS. Not in the plate. I'm quite sure, because I took them all out myself.

EUPH. [*perversely.*] Aleck ; *you* saw me put it in. That was what gave you such a fright.

ALECK. Oh, you put it in all right. Perhaps it fell on the floor. [*ROSS begins to look.*] The floor of the hall, I mean.

EUPH. How could it, Aleck ?

ALECK. [*turning to the fire again.*] Oh, I

don't know anything about the beastly ring.

WALD. [*to ROSS.*] So *you* didn't see the ring ?

ROSS. No. I—I'm perfectly certain it wasn't in the plate.

WALD. H'm. This is a queer business. [*To ROSS.*] Of course, legally, I suppose you'd have been perfectly entitled to keep *all* my daughter's jewels——

ROSS. [*drawing himself up.*] I—I don't understand, Mr Waldie.

WALD. I think *I* do. Gad, it's quite a stroke of genius. To work a young girl into such a state of excitement that she snatches off all her jewelry and puts it in your plate might give rise to ugly suspicions. But when the jewelry is promptly returned, suspicion is disarmed ; and who's to blame if the one really valuable piece goes amissing ?

ROSS. Mr Waldie ! This is monstrous !

EUPH. Father ! I gave it him—I gave them all. [*Offering ROSS the trinkets.*] Take them, Mr Ross ; please do. I want you to.

ROSS. What do you mean ?

EUPH. Mr Ross——

ROSS. [*vehemently.*] Don't speak to me like that ! You dare to think me guilty of stealing !

EUPHEMIA *draws back, frightened.*

WALD. Is this the *first* time you've been accused of stealing ?

ROSS. [*taken aback.*] The first time ? No. But I was innocent.

LESLIE. Oh, I say, you know ; I was at college at the time.

ROSS. [*turning to LESLIE.*] Ah ! [*Suppressing anger.*] Then it is you who have roused Mr Waldie's suspicions ?

LESLIE. Well—supposing it was ?

ROSS. Do you think it's a small thing to blacken a man's character ?

LESLIE. You did that yourself, years ago.

ROSS. I did not. [*LESLIE shrugs his shoulders.*] Oh, I know the case looked black against me, but if I'd been treated with common fairness the truth might have come to light. But you were all only too willing to believe me guilty. I wasn't ashamed of my religion, therefore I was a hypocrite. I was poor, therefore I was the thief. And one of you saved himself at my expense ! I wonder if it ever troubles him now ? But no ! A country lout—a common labourer's son ! Let him go back to his pick and shovel and be content in that state of life into which it pleased God to call him— No, I shouldn't say that. If

God pleased, it was for the best. But it's hard—hard! I like the good opinion of my fellow-men. I want to be believed in——

HAN. [*jumping up quickly.*] I believe in you, Mr Ross.

ROSS. Thank God for that.

HAN. Oh, I hate your God!

ROSS. Don't say that. It means that I'm an unfaithful witness.

HAN. If your God is good, why does he allow such things?

WALDIE, *who has been distinctly impressed by ROSS's outburst, pulls himself together and steels his heart.*

WALD. That's enough. We're not going into a discussion of theology. I want to know what's become of my daughter's ring?

ROSS. I've told you I know nothing about it.

WALD. On the other hand, my daughter says she put it in the plate.

EUPH. I gave it him, father.

WALD. [*sharply.*] Leave this to me. [*to ROSS.*] Fortunately, my daughter's assertion is capable of proof. Aleck!

ALECK. [*turning unwillingly.*] Oh, I don't know anything about it, father.

WALD. You say your sister put the ring in the plate ?

ALECK. Oh, she put it in all right. But it may have fallen out.

WALD. How so ? Was the plate a flat thing that a ring could easily roll off ?

ALECK. Of course not. But it might have been tilted, I suppose.

WALD. Did *you* tilt it ?

ALECK. No. What would I tilt it for ?

WALD. Then the ring was in the plate when you left. You can swear to that ?

ALECK. What's the good of swearing anything about it ?

WALD. Why are you trying to shield this man ?

ALECK. [*hastily.*] I'm not. I never dreamt of such a thing.

WALD. Answer my questions, then, in a straightforward way. Was the ring in the plate when you left ?

ALECK. [*with a gulp.*] Yes.

WALD. You can swear to that ?

ALECK. Yes.

WALDIE *turns to* ROSS. ALECK *turns away at once and drops into a chair.* HANNAH *looks at him, an expression of fear in her face.*

She leans on the mantelpiece and looks into the fire.]

WALD. [*to ROSS.*] There. My son's evidence is all the more damning as it is quite evident he wished to spare you.

ROSS *draws in his breath quickly. He looks at ALECK; for a brief moment, at HANNAH; then at WALDIE again.*

ROSS. I—I don't know what to think.

WALD. I *do*. Is it the case that Mr Finlay of St Oswald's is one of your supporters?

ROSS. He comes to some of the meetings.

WALD. Does he know your past history?

ROSS. [*confused.*] I—I don't know. I never told him.

WALD. [*with sarcasm.*] Then I think we may take it that he doesn't.

ROSS. I didn't think it necessary to tell him. I was wrong—I see it now.

WALD. You see your mistake, eh? Well, I shall remedy it. I shall make a point of seeing Mr Finlay to-morrow, unless——

ROSS. Unless what?

WALD. Unless you should happen to *find* the ring——

ROSS. How dare you! I gave you credit for being an honest man. I'm afraid you're a more

contemptible creature than the thief you believe me to be.

WALD. Oh, you needn't try bluster with me. Unfortunately, you've kept on the safe side of the law so I can't hand you over to the police. But I *can* warn the public against you, and I will. Now, go.

ROSS. [*drawing himself up.*] Yes. But I've something to say to *you* first. When I brought these things back, [*he points to the jewelry*] I hoped—I expected, to take them away again, or their equivalent in money——

WALD. Ha!

ROSS. Don't mistake me. I'm not making a confession; rather, an accusation. There are hundreds of poor creatures in this city going under every day in a desperate struggle with poverty, disease, and crime. You think nothing of spending thirty, forty, fifty pounds to buy your daughters or your sweethearts a ring. If I asked you for thirty pennies to save a soul from hell what answer would you make? God forgive me if I do you wrong, but have any one of you ever held out a helping hand to one of your brothers in distress? It was for them I coveted your daughter's baubles. For them, I——

EUPH. [*snatching the jewelry off the table and*

offering it to ROSS.] Take them, Mr Ross ; I want you to.

ROSS. [*drawing away.*] No. Disburse your own charities. There are hundreds in dire need almost at your door. But, until you are satisfied of my honesty, not one penny from this house shall pass through my hands.

EUPHEMIA *draws back, chagrined at ROSS's curt refusal.* ROSS *goes to the door.*

HANNAH *goes to him quickly.*

HAN. Goodnight, Mr Ross.

ROSS. Goodnight—and God be with you.

ROSS *goes out.* HANNAH *walks slowly back to the fire.* A silence falls on them all.

LESLIE *recovers first.*

LESLIE. Well, that's over.

WALD. What do you think of it ? Was it genuine—or——

LESLIE. The fellow's got the gift of the gab.

WALD. [*half ashamed.*] Gad ! I can't blame Phemie for being carried away. I was within an ace of it, myself.

LESLIE. [*turning to EUPHEMIA with a smile.*] I'm afraid your ring's gone for good.

EUPH. [*vehemently.*] Oh, I hate the ring and everything connected with it.

LESLIE. Phemie, my darling——

EUPH. I hate it, I tell you ; I hate it, I hate it, and most of all I hate you !

EUPHEMIA *bursts into hysterical weeping, and rushes to the door.* MRS WALDIE *jumps up and runs after her, overtaking her at the door.*

MRS W. Phemie, my darling, my poor child——

EUPHEMIA *and* MRS WALDIE *go out.*

LESLIE. [*who has been standing, thunder-struck.*] I'm going. Good-bye.

WALD. You mustn't mind what Phemie said. She's not responsible for her words, to-night.

LESLIE. [*shaking his head.*] Good-night, Hannah.

HANNAH *bows to him. He goes to the door.*

WALDIE *follows, patting him on the shoulder and trying to console him.*

WALD. We're all a bit off our heads just now, Leslie. Things will look different in the morning.

WALDIE *and* LESLIE *go out. The moment the door has closed, HANNAH turns to ALECK who is still sitting by the fire.*

HAN. Aleck. did you—did you take the ring ?

ALECK. [*rising slowly.*] What ?

HAN. Oh, Aleck ; I know it must have been a terrible temptation, but you can't let that man suffer for it.

ALECK. I don't know what you're talking about ! Why should I take Phemie's ring ?

HAN. There was a man here, to-night—Pritchard——

ALECK. [*startled anew.*] Did father see him ?

HAN. No ; only mother and me. He told us you owed him thirty pounds. We'll scrape up the money somehow, Aleck ; but you can't let that man bear the blame.

ALECK. [*angrily.*] What on earth do you mean ? I think you must be off your chump ! What makes you think I stole Phemie's ring ?

HAN. That thirty-seven pounds, Aleck——

ALECK. Oh, it's thirty-seven, now. I suppose, if a man told you to-morrow I owed him fifty——

HAN. Do you not owe him ? Mother said you asked her for five pounds——

ALECK. Yes ; I owe him something, and mother promised to pay.

HAN. But he said he had I.O.U.'s.——

ALECK. Did you see them ?

HAN. No ; but——

ALECK. There you are. You believe every

word *he* says, and when a perfect stranger denies a thing, you believe him too. But, when your own brother denies it——

HAN. [*going to him.*] I *will* believe you, Aleck, if you'll tell me honestly——

ALECK. No, no, no ! Now, will you believe me ?

HAN. Yes, Aleck ; yes.

She tries to throw her arms around him, but he throws her off roughly.

ALECK. Oh, I don't want any of that ! [*Going to the door.*] I think it's perfectly beastly of you, and I'm sick of the whole business. [*He opens the door.*] No, I tell you, no !

ALECK *goes out, banging the door behind him.* HANNAH *stands, leaning against the table.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE :—*Drawing-room in WALDIE'S house. [A few days have passed since Act II.]*

Originally the room has been furnished with an old-fashioned "drawing-room suite" and still retains a certain air of stiffness. But this has been relieved to some extent, at a later period, by the addition of some pretty ornaments on the mantelpiece, a few good engravings on the walls, artistic window curtains and other small feminine touches.

There are two windows at the back ; a big bow window on the right, a smaller one on the left. The fireplace is on the right, the door on the left. A writing-table stands against the wall, well forward on the left. On the upper side of the fireplace a couch stands at right angles to the wall, and on the lower side, an easy chair. There is a marble-topped cabinet between the two windows. A Sutherland table stands near the centre with tea-things on it. Close to this table,

two or three chairs and others suitably disposed about the room.

Aleck is sitting at the writing-table on which lies his books and papers. He is not studying, however, but engrossed in the "Pink 'Un." MRS WALDIE comes in, the "Church Times" in her hand. ALECK shuffles the "Pink 'Un" under a book and plunges at his work. MRS WALDIE goes to him, throwing her "Church Times" on the table as she gives him an affectionate little pat.

MRS W. [*rather nervously.*] Aleck dear; I want to have a talk with you.

ALECK. I'm awfully busy, mater.

MRS W. Yes, I know, dear. But you never told me what happened—about that dreadful man, you know.

ALECK. Oh, that's all right, mater. You needn't worry about *him* any more.

MRS W. [*astonished.*] But, Aleck—the money you owe him?

ALECK. I've paid him.

MRS W. Thirty-seven pounds!

ALECK. No, of course not. If it had been thirty-seven pounds, mother, do you think I'd have asked you for only five?

MRS W. But he said he had I.O.U.'s.

ALECK. Oh, I know, mother. You don't understand these things. I didn't really owe him the money—that is, if he'd gone to the pater he wouldn't have got a penny. He jolly well knew it, too. So when I offered him five pounds to call it square, he agreed.

MRS W. And did you get back your I.O.U.'s.?

ALECK. Of course. You don't suppose I'd be such a silly ass as to give him the money without getting them first?

MRS W. Oh, I'm so glad, Aleck—so very, very glad; because now, father doesn't need to know anything about it. Why didn't you tell me at once, dear? I've been worrying so.

ALECK. I never thought—that is—I supposed you'd know. I didn't know you were worrying, mater.

MRS W. Of course I was. Oh, my dear boy; you must never do anything like this again.

ALECK. You don't suppose it's so beastly jolly I'm dying to repeat it!

MRS W. My poor Aleck! I suppose we all have to learn by experience. I was so afraid your father would get to know. I was half afraid he *did* know something about it. He's been so strange the last few days.

ALECK. [*uneasily.*] I never noticed anything—except—he certainly hasn't badgered me as much as usual.

MRS W. He's not been himself at all. He's been so quiet and worried looking. And at night, he tosses and tumbles for hours instead of going right off to sleep the way he generally does. And he hasn't spoken a cross word to any of us—until this morning, when Hannah said she was going to the meeting to hear Mr Ross—

ALECK. Did Hannah tell him that? What did he say?

MRS W. He just snapped her nose off, and said she could go if she liked, it was nothing to him.

ALECK. And has she gone?

MRS W. Yes; and Phemie too.

ALECK. [*jumping up.*] Oh, confound the girls! Why can't they leave the fellow alone!

MRS W. That's what I say too, Aleck. But what could I do when your father didn't forbid it? I'm sure he would never have allowed it if there hadn't been something on his mind. But what it is, I don't know and I'm afraid to ask. He stopped on the street yesterday and talked to a beggar. I never knew him to do such a thing before, and I'm almost sure he gave him money.

ALECK. Mother! Do you suppose it's—
Ross?

MRS W. [*puzzled.*] What's Ross, my dear?

ALECK. Don't you remember what he said
the other night?

MRS W. He said so many things.

ALECK. [*shamefacedly.*] I mean about—
about holding out a helping hand, you know.

MRS W. But of course he's often heard that
before, because it's one of the things ministers
always say. I suppose they feel it's their duty.

ALECK. It was the way Ross said it.

MRS W. He was in such a temper at the
time.

ALECK. [*eagerly.*] You don't think Ross is
a—a good man, mother?

MRS W. My dear, he's a thief! Leslie told us.

ALECK. Yes. Leslie *did* tell us, didn't he?
So of course he was a thief before he—before
Phemie's ring disappeared.

MRS W. It's such a pity Phemie gave it him,
because nobody can say he stole it now,
and——

ALECK. They can't, can they, mother? It's
not *that* that's made him a thief; it's the other
thing.

MRS W. [*mystified.*] But of course he *is*

a thief, only we can't hand him over to the police and get back the ring.

ALECK. Yes; but he didn't steal the ring, mother. Nobody could call him a thief just for that. It's the other thing, isn't it?

MRS W. It's both, Aleck.

ALECK. Yes, but—oh, what does it matter! Let's talk of something else.

MRS W. It was you who began, dear. I was talking of your father.

EUPHEMIA *and* HANNAH *come in with their outdoor wraps on. EUPHEMIA is in front; she is excited and indignant. HANNAH is calm on the surface. JEANIE follows, bringing in tea and hot water. She goes out again. MRS WALDIE goes to the tea-table. The girls throw off their wraps and have tea as they talk.*

EUPH. Mother, he's gone! They've chucked him out of the meetings! Isn't it a shame?

MRS W. Who's gone, my dear?

EUPH. Mr Ross, of course. It's all father's doing. That's why he told Hannah she could go. Well, their stupid old meetings won't last long. They can't run the show without Punch!

MRS W. Phemie, my child; you do say such irreverent things.

ALECK *takes his tea over to the writing-table and feigns interest in his work.*

EUPH. Well, what do they want to be so horrid to Mr Ross for? It's not as if he had really stolen the ring. I *gave* it to him. Besides, their meetings are not worth going to, now; are they, Hannah?

HAN. It certainly didn't strike me as interesting, this afternoon.

MRS W. [*reprovingly.*] They're religious meetings, Hannah; they're not supposed to be interesting.

EUPH. I wonder if Mr Ross will start opposition meetings?

MRS W. My dear! Nobody would go if he did.

EUPH. Oh, wouldn't they! I would, for one.

MRS W. Your father wouldn't allow you.

EUPH. Perhaps not, but— [*She shrugs her shoulders and smiles.*]

MRS W. Oh, my dear; I do wish you'd try to please your father, because he's dreadfully upset about something—perhaps it's Leslie.

EUPH. [*tossing her head.*] H'mph! [*With sudden interest.*] Mother, do you know if Mabel Dunn is staying with the Fyfes just now?

MRS W. Yes, dear; she came yesterday. Marjory told me.

EUPH. It's Marjory's doing! She always hated me——

MRS W. Phemie, dear!

EUPH. Oh, yes she does. She'd far rather Leslie married Mabel. So would Mrs Fyfe, for that matter.

MRS W. [*eagerly.*] But if *you* want Leslie——

EUPH. I never said I did. Mr Ross is worth ten of him! It's an awful pity he stole that money when he was young——

MRS W. Good gracious, Phemie! You're not thinking of marrying Mr Ross?

EUPH. Not now, of course.

HAN. [*indignantly.*] Phemie! You don't think Mr Ross stole your ring?

EUPH. Of course it's not stealing, exactly; and he said it was for the poor. But he should have brought it back with the other things, shouldn't he?

HANNAH *turns away, contemptuously.*

ALECK. [*jumping up and slamming a book on the table.*] Oh, damn it all! I can't work when you're all jabbering—Ross, Leslie, Leslie, Ross! [*He goes to the door.*] Give us a rest, can't you?

HAN. [*turning in dismay.*] Aleck !

ALECK. [*fiercely.*] Oh, shut up ! [*He goes out.*]

EUPH. [*staring in surprise.*] Well, I never !
The studious young man !

MRS W. Oh, well, Phemie ; I expect our talking does interfere with his studies.

EUPH. So it would appear ! [*With mock sentiment.*] How little we know of those nearest and dearest to us ! Now, if any one had told me Aleck would mind his studies being interrupted——

MRS W. You know how father finds fault with him when he doesn't study.

EUPH. Oh, has father been jumping on him ?

MRS W. No ; but—your father's so out of sorts just now——

EUPH. To put it mildly ! I suppose it's my fault. I expect if—if I made it up with Leslie—
[*She pauses.*]

MRS W. Oh, if you would, my dear. I'm sure it would please your father.

EUPH. Yes ; but how ? I can't rush round to his house and implore him, on my knees, to let all be as it was of yore ! Besides, that odious Mabel Dunn is there.

MRS W. Oh, I'm sure if you were willing, Phemie, Leslie would soon come round.

EUPH. [*after a moment's thought.*] Well—we'll see. In the meantime, I'm going to change my dress. You'd better too, Hannah. If you're late for dinner, you know what father will be like.

MRS W. We'd better all go.

EUPHEMIA goes out. MRS WALDIE goes to the writing-table to get her "*Church Times*" and picks up the "*Pink 'Un*" instead. She looks at it with shocked surprise. With a quick glance at HANNAH to make sure she has not seen it, MRS WALDIE slips the "*Pink 'Un*" between the leaves of her "*Church Times*" and sails out of the room with dignity. HANNAH picks up her hat and coat and is about to follow, but, changing her mind, throws them down again and sits down near the fire. JEANIE comes in.

JEAN. If you please, Miss Hannah ; there's a gentleman wishes to see you.

HAN. [*sitting up quickly.*] Pritchard !

JEAN. No. Mr Ross.

HAN. Oh ! It's Miss Phemie he wants, isn't it ?

JEAN. No miss ; he said *you*.

HAN. Where is he ?

JEAN. He said he'd rather wait in the hall.

HAN. Oh, bring him in here, Jeanie.

JEAN. Yes, miss.

JEANIE *goes out and returns at once, ushering in* ROSS.

ROSS. You must excuse the liberty I've taken, asking for you——

HAN. *It was me you wanted, then ?*

ROSS. Yes. I— [*He passes his hand over his brow.*] I've had a very unpleasant experience this afternoon. I—I thought I'd ask your help.

HAN. Won't you sit down, Mr Ross ?

ROSS. Thank you.

They both sit down. ROSS hesitates.

HAN. [*nervously.*] Was it something about —your meetings ?

ROSS. No. It was about— [*He hesitates.*]

HAN. [*anxiously.*] Not—the ring ?

ROSS. Yes. I think I've seen it.

HAN. [*springing to her feet.*] Seen it ! Where ?

ROSS. [*getting up.*] I don't know that it *was* the ring, Miss Waldie, I was only told so.

HAN. By whom ?

ROSS. A man—Pritchard.

HAN. I knew it, I knew it ! Oh, what must you think of us, Mr Ross ! But my father knew nothing about it ; he didn't, indeed.

ROSS. [*startled.*] Did *you* ?

HAN. No, no ; I only suspected, and as soon as you had gone, I asked Aleck and he denied it—over and over again.

ROSS. What made you—suspect ?

HAN. Pritchard had come to mother and me that night. He told us Aleck owed him money.

ROSS. [*quickly.*] Did you give him any ?

HAN. No. Mother wanted to, but I wouldn't let her.

ROSS. Ah ! Then Pritchard *has* a grudge against you. I was sure of it.

HAN. [*surprised.*] Do you know Pritchard ?
[ROSS *makes a gesture of dissent.*] Why did he go to you ?

ROSS. There was a paragraph in the paper, you know. I suppose that gave him the cue.

HAN. That must have been Leslie. Father wouldn't talk about it.

ROSS. You accused your brother of— [*He stops.*]

HAN. I didn't accuse him. I only asked. And when he denied it, I tried to believe him—I tried so hard, Mr Ross, and I'd almost come to

think I did. Oh, I know I shouldn't have, but——

ROSS. Why not ?

HAN. I mean I—I ought to have had the courage to face the truth.

ROSS. Of course. But—which is the truth ?

HAN. [*amazed.*] Have you any doubt ? [*With sudden eagerness.*] Did Pritchard not get the ring from Aleck ?

ROSS. He said he did. [*HANNAH'S face falls.*] But if your brother says he didn't ? This Pritchard is one of the vilest of men. Why should we accept his word in preference to your brother's ?

HAN. [*staring at him.*] Do you mean that you're going to take Aleck's part ?

ROSS. Against Pritchard, certainly.

HAN. But—but why ?

ROSS. The other night, Miss Waldie, you took mine.

HAN. And just for that—that little thing——

ROSS. It was not a little thing—to me.

HAN. But Aleck has wronged you——

ROSS. We don't know.

HAN. Do you mean you think he didn't do it ?

ROSS. [*after a moment's hesitation.*] No ; I

don't think that. I've tried to, but I can't. Oh, isn't it detestable that we're all always ready to think the worst of each other—never the best.

HAN. [*bitterly.*] Surely, in this case, you are justified.

ROSS. [*vehemently.*] No, I am *not*! Oh, you don't understand. Years ago, the evidence against me was even stronger, and I was innocent. If *I* am justified, then *they* were too. Everything pointed to my being the thief. They even found the money in my pocket—marked money—and I don't know how it came there. Could anything be more damning than that?

HAN. But there was you, yourself, Mr Ross. Surely no one who knew you believed you guilty?

ROSS. They did, Miss Waldie. I don't think any one but you has ever really believed me innocent, except my father and mother, and people said they were blinded by their love.

HAN. [*a little confused.*] But my brother is so—so different.

ROSS. How "different"?

HAN. Oh, you know what I mean. He's not bad, Mr Ross; only weak and cowardly. Oh, it's absurd to say love blinds people. It

doesn't. I love my brother—I love him all the more because I know he is weak and foolish, and has need of me.

ROSS. You've helped him——

HAN. No, I haven't. That's the terrible thing. I've helped to make him what he is.

ROSS. I don't believe that!

HAN. But it's true! Oh you don't know the charming family you've stumbled into. We're all cowards and hypocrites—no, not all—father is honest. But we're all afraid of him.

ROSS. I should say he was a hard man.

HAN. He's had a hard life. He has fought his way up from nowhere. He has never had time for recreation—that's why he can't understand Aleck.

ROSS. I understand. Excess is a snare for the busy man, as well as the pleasure seeker.

HAN. It's not father's fault. It's ours—mostly mine. We keep things from him. He thinks *his* way is doing well. He doesn't know about Aleck; and when he does—it will break his heart.

HANNAH nearly breaks down, drops into a chair, and dabs her eyes with her handkerchief. ROSS takes a turn up the room

and back. He lays his hand on HANNAH'S shoulder.

ROSS. Miss Waldie ! [*HANNAH raises her head.*] I think, first of all, we should see Aleck, himself.

HAN. Will *you* see him ?

ROSS. Unless you think you'd better see him alone.

HAN. No, no ; it's not that. [*She rings the bell.*] How heavenly kind you are !

ROSS. You make too much of it. I would gladly do a great deal more than that for—for your brother.

HAN. I think you are the most forgiving man I ever— [*JEANIE opens the door.*] Oh, Jeanie ; will you ask Mr Aleck to come here.

JEAN. [*surprised.*] Mr Aleck isn't in yet.

HAN. [*puzzled.*] Not in ?

JEAN. He went out just after you and Miss Phemie came home.

HAN. [*blankly.*] Oh ! Very well, Jeanie. [*JEANIE goes out. HANNAH turns to ROSS.*] That knocks the bottom out of everything.

ROSS. You mustn't say that. "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

HAN. [*drawing away, peevishly.*] Oh, now

you're going to quote Scripture and preach at me.

ROSS. [*repressing a smile.*] I am quoting the poet, Cowper. If you prefer a more secular authority, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

HAN. I suppose you think I'm a—a heathen, or something ?

ROSS. No. I think you're nearer the light than you know yourself.

HAN. Well, I'm not.

ROSS. [*tactfully.*] After all, I think it's much better you should see your brother, alone. If *I* spoke to him, he'd probably think I was preaching.

HAN. [*flinching.*] I—I suppose I deserve that.

ROSS. [*anxiously.*] I didn't mean it in that way. It's simply a statement of fact. It's one of the difficulties every minister has to contend with. When he speaks quite sincerely, people suspect him of talking "shop."

HAN. [*earnestly.*] I didn't think that, Mr Ross ; I know you are perfectly sincere. But—oh, you must forgive me ; I'm so terribly distressed. It's not only Aleck. It's father, afterwards.

ROSS. If I can be of any use I'll come—any time you send for me.

HAN. [*eagerly.*] Oh, will you? You might be of the greatest help. But—where shall I send?

ROSS. Thirty-seven Bank Street; Mrs Scott. It's quite near.

HAN. Thank you, thank you.

EUPHEMIA *opens the door.* HANNAH and ROSS *instinctively draw away from each other*; EUPHEMIA *sees this and stands for a moment in surprise but recovers herself before they see her.* She advances to ROSS *with a bright smile.*

EUPH. How do you do, Mr Ross? I'm sorry you had to wait, but the maid only this minute told me you were here.

ROSS. [*shaking hands.*] Oh, it's all right, Miss Waldie. It was your sister I came to see.

EUPH. Oh! I didn't know you and Hannah knew each other.

ROSS. [*smiling.*] I'm afraid I presumed on very slight acquaintance.

EUPH. We were so awfully sorry, this afternoon. Of course Hannah will have told you how distressed and disappointed we were not to find you at the meeting?

ROSS. [*puzzled*] The meeting?

EUPH. [*surprised.*] Didn't Hannah tell you we were there? Why, whatever have you been talking about? [*She looks from one to the other.*]

HAN. [*hastily.*] I don't think Mr Ross will like to talk about the meetings—with us.

EUPH. [*to ROSS.*] Oh, I know it's perfectly dreadful! I feel so guilty about it. I'm sure you must think it was *my* fault.

ROSS. Oh, I don't think there's any blame attached to you.

EUPH. It's so nice of you to say so. But I can't help blaming myself—a little. I've been so distressed about you. I feel as if I'd robbed you of your living——

ROSS. You needn't be disturbed about that. [*Smiling.*] It wasn't a salaried position.

EUPH. [*wrinkling her brow.*] Not salaried? Then——

ROSS. [*Seeing a possible misconception.*] I am fortunate enough to have a small income of my own.

EUPH. Oh, I'm so glad. Then, I needn't worry any more?

ROSS. Not about my "living."

EUPH. I mean about that, of course— But I'm so glad you came. I wanted to see you so

much. I want you to advise me about helping the poor.

ROSS. Your sister can advise you much better than I.

EUPH. [*contemptuously.*] Hannah doesn't know anything about the poor.

ROSS. [*gravely.*] I think you hardly do your sister justice.

HAN. Oh, it's quite true. I don't. I don't believe I ever helped a single soul in all my life.

ROSS. There are different kinds of poor. Some need bread and butter; and some courage and sympathy.

EUPH. [*with a malicious little laugh.*] I think the "bread and butter" kind would stand the best chance with Hannah.

ROSS. [*coldly.*] I don't agree with you Good-bye, Miss Waldie. [*He shakes hands with HANNAH.*] And please remember, if I can be of any use——

HAN. I will— and thank you.

ROSS. [*bowing to EUPHEMIA.*] Good-bye.

EUPH. Oh, you're running away, and I haven't had time to say a word. I'll see you to the door.

ROSS and EUPHEMIA go out. HANNAH picks up her hat and coat slowly and rather

wearily. As she turns to go to the door,
EUPHEMIA *bounces in, in a towering rage.*

EUPH. What do you mean by it? What do you mean by turning Mr Ross against me?

HAN. [*thunderstruck.*] I didn't!

EUPH. Oh, don't pretend you're so innocent! I saw you when I came in. You want him for yourself—you're trying to take him away from me. You've been running me down, and it's not fair. He's mine! I found him, first!

HAN. Phemie!

EUPH. You know you have? He'd hardly look at me. He almost ran away from me—he was abominably rude. And it's all your doing. You must have said something dreadful about me!

HAN. I never said a word——

EUPH. It's not true! Why is he so changed? How dare he try to snub me? You've said something——

HAN. I haven't! It's what you said yourself——

EUPH. I didn't say a thing. I was particularly nice to him. I had every right to be angry, but I didn't say a word. I grovelled at his feet.

HAN. Perhaps you grovelled too much. Some men don't like it.

EUPH. How dare you! What is he, after all? A common labourer's son. And if he *has* an income of his own, I don't believe it's much——

HAN. Stop, Phemie, stop.

EUPH. Oh, I know it's all your doing. He'd never have dared if you hadn't put him up to it, and I hate you, I hate you, I tell you, and him too. I hate you——

WALDIE *comes in as EUPHEMIA is speaking.*

WALD. [*at the door.*] Good gracious!

EUPH. [*wheeling round.*] It's Hannah, father. She's treated me shamefully, and I'll never forgive her, never!

EUPHEMIA *bursts into tears and rushes out.*

WALDIE *shuts the door after her and turns to HANNAH, sternly.*

WALD. What have you been doing to your sister?

HAN. [*looking at him blankly.*] Nothing, father.

WALD. It's no use saying that. You must have done something.

HAN. [*earnestly.*] I haven't indeed, father. It's all a mistake of Phemie's.

WALD. What were you quarrelling about ?

HAN. I wasn't quarrelling——

WALD. Will you answer my question ?

HAN. [*suddenly confronting WALDIE.*] Well—about Mr Ross !

WALD. [*starting and turning away.*] Good Heavens ! Are we never to get quit of that man ?

HAN. I don't think we are.

WALD. [*wheeling round.*] What do you mean ?

HAN. We've done him an injury, and——

WALD. We've done nothing of the kind. [*Vehemently.*] The man's a swindler.

HAN. He's not. You *know* he isn't.

WALD. [*angrily.*] I say the man's a swindler.

HAN. But, in your heart, you know he's not. You know you've wronged him ; you'd like to get him out of your thoughts ; but you can't—you can't—and you never will !

WALD. Hannah ! Have *you* tried to—to forget him ?

HAN. No. I don't want to. Neither will you, father, when you know him as I do.

WALD. Have you seen him again ? At the meeting, to-day ?

HAN. You know he wasn't there.

WALD. I don't.

HAN. You told Mr Finlay about him.

WALD. I did nothing of the kind.

HAN. Oh, father; I'm so glad. I might have known you wouldn't till you were sure. But—— (*She hesitates.*)

WALD. Will you tell me what you're talking about? When did you see Ross?

HAN. He came here——

WALD. Here? Confound his impudence!

HAN. Don't, father. Wait till you've heard—what Aleck has to tell you.

WALD. Aleck! Good God, is he in it too?

HAN. Don't ask me, father. I mustn't tell you anything. It's been my fault entirely; but Aleck must tell you, himself. He must indeed, father.

WALD. What on earth— [*JEANIE comes in with a card on a salver. WALDIE takes the card and looks at it, puzzled.*] James Pritchard. Who is James Pritchard?

JEAN. He's in the dining-room, sir.

WALD. I'll see him, directly.

HAN. No, father; don't. [*to JEANIE.*] Tell him Mr Waldie can't see him to-day.

JEANIE *turns to go.*

WALD. Wait a minute, Jeanie. [*To HANNAH.*]
Do you know this man ?

HAN. Yes, father. You mustn't see him—
not till you've seen Aleck. Don't see him—I
beg of you.

WALD. What nonsense is this ?

HAN. It's not nonsense, father.

WALD. If it's not nonsense, it's worse. [*to*
JEANIE.] Bring the man in here.

HAN. No, don't.

WALD. [*to JEANIE.*] Do as I tell you.
[*JEANIE goes out, slowly and unwillingly.*] Now,
what's the meaning of all this ?

HAN. That man has Phemie's ring, father.
He——

WALD. How do you know ?

HAN. Mr Ross was here just before you came
in. He told me. He got the ring from Aleck,
father.

WALD. Aleck !

HAN. Yes. Aleck owed him money—he gave
him the ring in payment——

WALD. What are you talking about ?

HAN. Aleck gave him the ring, father, to pay
his debts. Oh, won't you understand ? There
isn't time to explain——

WALD. [*seizing HANNAH roughly by the*

shoulders.] Do you mean to say my son's a thief!

HAN. Don't, father. Mr Ross said we shouldn't believe it till Aleck had a chance to speak for himself. But the man has the ring—he says he got it from Aleck.

WALD. This is a trick of Ross's to revenge himself!

HAN. It isn't! Mr Ross came to me to try to save Aleck.

WALD. [*pushing HANNAH away.*] My God! [*He leans on the mantelpiece.*]

HAN. [*timidly.*] Father; Mr Ross said we shouldn't believe the man. It may not be Phemie's ring at all.

WALD. [*fiercely.*] Stop your chatter and let me think.

HANNAH *draws away in keen distress. Almost immediately, JEANIE opens the door, admits PRITCHARD, and goes out again.*

PRIT. [*coming in.*] Good afternoon, Mr Waldie. [*He sees HANNAH, smiles and bows.*] Pleased to see you again, Miss Waldie.

WALD. [*curtly.*] What's your business with me?

PRIT. Oh, I shan't detain you long. I understand you've lost a valuable ring.

WALD. Are you a detective ?

PRIT. [*uneasily.*] No. Is the matter in the hands of the police ?

WALD. One doesn't lose a valuable ring without making some attempt to recover it.

HANNAH *looks at her father with sudden eagerness.*

PRIT. Ah—quite so—of course. Perhaps I may be able to save you further trouble. [*He takes the ring out of his pocket.*] This is your ring, I think ?

WALD. [*taking the ring and looking at it.*] No. This is not my ring. [*He hands it back to PRITCHARD.*]

PRIT. [*taken aback.*] Not yours !

WALD. [*smiling carelessly.*] Did you think it was ?

PRIT. I got it from your son.

WALD. Indeed ?

PRIT. [*after a moment's thought.*] Then it will be all right if I—er—turn it into money ? Your son gave it me in payment of a debt. I shouldn't care to incur a charge of—reset.

WALD. [*his eyes blazing.*] Do you suggest that my son had stolen the ring ? [*He advances threateningly on PRITCHARD.*]

PRIT. [*backing to the door.*] No, no; certainly not——

ALECK *comes in. He stands thunderstruck.*

WALD. [*to PRITCHARD.*] Get out, before I kick you out!

PRITCHARD *slips past ALECK and goes out hastily.* WALDIE *stands looking at ALECK.*

HAN. [*pleading.*] Father!

WALD. [*to ALECK.*] Shut the door. [*ALECK does so, and turns round slowly, keeping close to the door.*] God in heaven! Have you nothing to say for yourself?

HAN. He'd have told you, to-night, father—he would indeed if you'd only waited.

WALD. [*turning savagely on HANNAH.*] Keep quiet, or leave the room.

ALECK. [*taking a step forward.*] Leave Hannah alone!

WALD. Oh you've found your tongue, have you? So you've achieved the distinction of becoming a thief? Your skill in shuffling the blame on to the shoulders of another should carry you far in the noble profession you've chosen.

HAN. Father, have pity!

WALD. Had he any pity when he saved himself at Ross's expense? Had he any compunc-

tion when he let us all believe Ross was a liar ? But I'm forgetting. *You* were in the secret. No doubt you aided and abetted !

ALECK. It's a lie ! You know she didn't.

WALD. Of course you are an authority on lies.

ALECK. [*bursting into hysterical fury.*] It's you that made me so. It's your fault I'm a thief. You've always ragged and bullied me. You've never let me do anything I wanted, so I had to get my amusements on the sly.

WALDIE *winces as if he had been struck, but pulls himself together as ALECK finishes.*

WALD. What are your—amusements, may I ask ?

ALECK. Cards, billiards, gambling, drinking—anything I could do without being found out. You wouldn't let me play cricket and football, so I took to these, instead.

HAN. Aleck ; that's enough !

WALD. Oh, I think I'm entitled to know something of my own family.

HAN. I don't know that you are. You've never tried to know us.

ALECK. You've made us all afraid of you. We all hate you— [*WALDIE starts.*]

HAN. No, Aleck ; we don't.

WALD. Oh, let him tell the truth—for once.

HAN. It's not the truth.

ALECK. Hannah's the only one who ever had a good word for you, and you've always been down on her and fussed over Phemie, because she's a beastly little sneak——

HAN. Aleck!

ALECK. I don't care. It's true. It's him that made me a coward and a hypocrite! It's him that made me a thief and a cad! [*Turning on WALDIE.*] I hate you, do you hear! It's your fault I stole the ring. I've been in hell ever since. I'm glad it's found out. I hope you'll send me away. I don't care if I'm sent to jail. I don't care what becomes of me if only I never set foot in this house again!

He suddenly bursts into violent sobbing, drops into a chair and buries his face in his hands. HANNAH runs and puts her arms round him.

HAN. Aleck, Aleck!

WALDIE *stands like a stone.* By and bye, he goes slowly to ALECK.

WALD. [*with suppressed emotion.*] Aleck; I didn't know all this. If you'd only told me before! Can't we make a fresh start, old boy? Be a man. Let's begin all over again.

ALECK. [*raising his head, sullenly.*] It's too late now.

WALD. [*laying his hands on ALECK's shoulder.*] Don't say that, my boy; you're only eighteen. It can't be too late——

ALECK. [*jumping up and shaking off WALDIE's hand as if he loathed it.*] It's too late, I tell you. I shall always hate you!

He goes to the door. As he does so, MRS

WALDIE comes in, alarmed and excited.

MRS W. Oh, my poor Aleck! That dreadful man——

ALECK. He's not as bad as me. I'm a thief, and a liar, and a cad, and a coward, and it's you and father made me so!

ALECK rushes out. MRS WALDIE stares in surprise, then turns reproachfully to WALDIE.

MRS W. You're so hard on the poor boy, John!

WALD. Hard on him! Didn't you hear what he said? It's he who's hard on us.

HAN. [*anxiously.*] I must go after Aleck, father. [*She goes to the door.*] Mother doesn't know about—the ring. [*She goes out.*]

MRS W. What does she mean?

WALD. She's left me to explain to you that our son's a thief.

MRS W. A thief !

WALD. Yes. He stole Phemie's ring.

MRS W. Oh, John ! But you mustn't be too hard on poor Aleck. After all, it's only Phemie's ring. It's not as if it were outside the family.

WALD. My God, Mary ; can you find comfort in that ? He says it's our fault. He says I've bullied him—I don't know what you've done. But, between the two of us, we've made him what he is.

MRS W. But if it's only Phemie's ring it can easily be put right.

WALD. Put right ! Can it ever be put right ? He says he hates us, Mary. He shook my hand off as if it was something poisonous.

MRS W. John, dear ; if you'll only be lenient with him he'll soon come round.

WALD. He says it's too late. And, God help me I'm afraid he's right.

WALDIE *sits down, and buries his face in his hands.* MRS WALDIE, *looking frightened, hesitates a moment, then tip-toes out of the room.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE :—*Same as Act III. A few hours later.*

MRS WALDIE *is sitting on the couch, knitting, stopping occasionally to brush away a tear. EUPHEMIA comes in quickly. Seeing MRS WALDIE she looks rather annoyed.*

EUPH. Oh ! You here, mother.

MRS W. Yes, dear.

EUPH. [*going to MRS WALDIE.*] Mother, I'm expecting Leslie.

MRS W. [*eagerly.*] Oh, have you made it up ?

EUPH. Not yet ; but we're going to. I sent him a note.

MRS W. Oh, my dear, I'm so glad, because I'm sure it will please your father.

EUPH. 'Myes. But we haven't made it up yet, of course.

MRS W. [*anxiously.*] You said you were going to.

EUPH. If Leslie comes, and—if he's open to—er—reason.

MRS W. Of course he will be.

EUPH. I think so. But—[*she hesitates*] I'm expecting him here any minute, mother. Won't you go away?

MRS W. [*taken aback.*] My dear, how can I?
A motor car is heard outside. EUPHEMIA runs to the window and peeps out, then comes quickly back to MRS WALDIE.

EUPH. Oh, do go away.

MRS. W. [*whimpering.*] Where am I to go, Phemie?

EUPH. Oh, anywhere. Can't you go to the library?

MRS W. Your father's there.

EUPH. To Aleck, then.

MRS W. He's locked himself up in his room and won't allow any one in but Hannah.

EUPH. Well, go somewhere! How can I make up to Leslie with you looking on?

MRS W. How unkind you are—driving me away.

MRS WALDIE *begins to cry. The door opens. Like a flash EUPHEMIA runs to her mother, puts her arms round her neck, and comforts her—a picture of filial affection, as Leslie comes in.*

EUPH. Mother dearest, don't cry. We must bear up as best we can. [*She looks up with well-*

feigned surprise.] Oh, Leslie! I hoped you'd come! [*She runs to him and sobs upon his shoulder.*]

LESLIE. Good Lord! Phemie darling, what's the matter?

EUPH. Oh, Leslie, such a terrible thing. We're in the most dreadful trouble.

LESLIE. Good Heavens! What have you done, now?

EUPH. [*rather put out.*] It's not me. It's Aleck.

LESLIE. [*relieved.*] Oh, is that all?

MRS WALDIE *gets up, but stands hesitating.*

EUPH. You don't know how terrible it is! You don't suppose I'd have sent you that note unless something dreadful had happened? I was afraid you'd think it—unmaidenly.

LESLIE. Rot!

EUPH. I hardly knew what I was doing. I only knew I loved you.

LESLIE. [*putting his arms round her.*] My darling!

EUPHEMIA *having gained her point, draws away from LESLIE. They move to the couch, and presently sit down.*

EUPH. [*drawing away.*] Oh, you mustn't, Leslie. Not till you've heard about Aleck.

Perhaps you'll never want to speak to me again !

MRS W. Oh, my dear, it was only *your* ring. It's not as if it was outside the family.

LESLIE. [*startled.*] What ring ? What scrape has he got into, now ?

EUPH. My ring, Leslie. It was Aleck stole it.

LESLIE. Good Lord ! What on earth made him do it ?

EUPH. He'd got into debt. The man was going to father if he didn't pay. He hadn't any money.

LESLIE. [*jumping up.*] Heavens alive ! That's no excuse for stealing !

EUPH. [*getting up.*] No. But he did it.

MRS W. It wasn't Aleck's fault. The man said he must be paid, and Hannah wouldn't give him the money.

LESLIE. What man ?

MRS W. The man who——

EUPH. [*interposing.*] Oh, some man he owed money to. He said he'd go to father if Aleck didn't pay.

LESLIE. How did you find out ?

EUPH. The man brought the ring to father.

LESLIE. Phew ! What did your father do ?

EUPH. He didn't do anything. He let the

man go away with the ring. Said it wasn't his.

LESLIE. [*eagerly.*] Do you mean he denied all knowledge of it? Made the man believe Aleck hadn't stolen it?

EUPH. I suppose so. I wasn't there.

LESLIE. That was jolly clever of your father.

EUPH. I don't see it. He let the man walk off with my ring. We can't possibly claim it now.

LESLIE. Heavens, Phemie, what does the ring matter, as long as the other thing's hushed up?

MRS W. [*eagerly.*] That's what *I* say. It ought to be hushed up.

LESLIE. Of course. It's the only thing to do.

EUPH. But father! It's put him into such an awkward fix—with Ross.

LESLIE. The deuce! I'd forgotten Ross! It's put me into a beastly hole too.

EUPH. [*surprised.*] Why? What difference will it make to you?

LESLIE. I told old Finlay he'd stolen the ring, you know.

EUPH. It was *you* told Mr Finlay and got him turned out of the meetings!

LESLIE. What do you mean ? [*sternly.*] Do you—do you care for Ross ?

EUPH. [*vehemently.*] No ; I hate him ! He's a perfect beast ; he was abominably rude to me. I absolutely detest him.

LESLIE. [*convinced by her unmistakeable sincerity.*] By Jove !

EUPH. Don't let's talk about it any more, to-night. Let's talk about—ourselves.

MRS W. But, my dear, we *must* know what we're going to do.

EUPH. [*sharply.*] Oh, I don't see that Aleck's the only person to be considered.

LESLIE. [*to MRS WALDIE.*] I don't see that we can do anything. We must just let the matter drop. Of course Ross will have to be squared ; but—[*he looks at his watch.*] I'll see Mr Waldie about it in the morning. I must be off.

EUPH. [*blankly.*] Off ! And leave me here, alone ?

LESLIE. I'm awfully sorry, Phemie ; but I can't help it, really. We've got a box at the Empire for the second house, to-night. I've got to take mother and the girls.

EUPH. [*wistfully.*] I've never been to the Empire.

LESLIE. Why shouldn't you come too ?

EUPH. Oh, I couldn't, Leslie, with all this trouble in the house. I couldn't, could I, mother ? If it leaked out, people would say I was—heartless.

LESLIE. Nonsense, Phemie. It's not going to leak out.

EUPH. Of course, if it's going to be hushed up we ought to go on as if nothing had happened.

MRS W. Yes ; I'm sure that would be best.

EUPH. Then you think I *ought* to go ?

MRS W. If—if Leslie thinks so——

LESLIE. Of course. Mabel Dunn's with us, did you know ?

EUPH. Oh, is she ? How delightful to see dear old Mabel.

LESLIE. Then you'll come ?

EUPH. I shan't enjoy it a bit, of course. But—for the sake of appearances—I'll run and put on my wraps. I won't be a minute. [*She runs to the door. HANNAH opens it and comes in.*] Oh, Hannah ! Leslie's here. [*EUPHEMIA runs out.*]

HAN. How do you do ? [*She shakes hands rather coldly with LESLIE.*] I suppose they've told you ?

LESLIE. Yes. It's a beastly business, isn't it?

HAN. [*going to the fire.*] It's more than that, I'm afraid.

LESLIE. Oh, I don't know. The great thing is to keep it quiet.

MRS W. [*eagerly.*] Leslie says we must just keep our mouths shut and go on as if nothing had happened.

HAN. Isn't Leslie a little late in—keeping his mouth shut?

LESLIE. Oh, you mean about old Finlay? I'm sorry, of course, because it recoils on ourselves. But we can let it drop, I don't suppose we shall hear any more of it.

HAN. [*indignantly.*] Do you know Mr Ross has been put out of the meetings?

LESLIE. I don't see what that's got to do with it.

HAN. You think we should save ourselves at his expense.

MRS W. Leslie says he can be squared.

HAN. [*contemptuously.*] Oh!

LESLIE. [*flushing.*] Look here, Hannah; what I told Mr Finlay was true.

HAN. It was not.

LESLIE. Rubbish! I was at college at the time. I saw it myself.

MRS W. It's so unnatural of you, Hannah. One would think you thought more of this Ross than of your own brother.

HAN. Mother !

EUPHEMIA *comes back dressed for going out.*

EUPH. I'm ready, Leslie.

LESLIE. [*relieved.*] Oh, all right. Good-night, Mrs Waldie. [*He shakes hands with her, and goes to EUPHEMIA.*] Come along.

EUPHEMIA *and* LESLIE *go to the door.*

HAN. [*surprised.*] Where are you going ?

EUPH. With Leslie, of course.

LESLIE. We're in rather a hurry, Hannah. I'll see your father to-morrow. Good-night.

EUPHEMIA *and* LESLIE *go out.*

HAN. [*to MRS WALDIE.*] Where are they off to ?

MRS W. Oh, my dear, they must keep up appearances. They've gone to the Empire.

HAN. The Empire ! To-night !

MRS W. They're quite right, Hannah. It's all going to be hushed up.

HAN. Do you think father will agree to that ?

MRS W. Oh, you're both so hard and unnatural. It's really all your fault. If you hadn't insulted the man he wouldn't have gone

to your father at all. And now there's a chance to hush it up——

HAN. There isn't, mother. We couldn't possibly let Mr Ross suffer for Aleck's fault.

MRS W. My dear, it would soon blow over. It's not as if he were a regular minister. People think all the more of revivalists if they've been dreadfully wicked to begin with.

They hear voices raised in angry altercation, outside.

HAN. Hush, mother.

MRS W. Oh, what's happened now !

ALECK. [*outside.*] I don't see what business it is of yours.

LESLIE. [*outside.*] It's very much my business ! You've run us into quite enough of a mess without letting us in for a public scandal.

HAN. [*running to the door.*] Aleck !

ALECK comes in, wearing a thick overcoat and carrying a bag. LESLIE and EUPHEMIA follow.

MRS W. Oh, my poor, poor boy ! [*She tries to embrace him.*]

ALECK. [*jerking away roughly.*] Leave me alone, can't you ?

MRS WALDIE sits on the couch dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief.

LESLIE. [*to HANNAH.*] The young ass was going to run away.

EUPH. [*sneering.*] Oh, very likely Hannah put him up to it.

ALECK. [*angrily.*] She didn't. You jolly well know it too.

LESLIE. Well, anyhow, we're not going to let you.

ALECK. I'll do what I like.

HAN. [*reproachfully.*] Aleck, you promised you wouldn't.

ALECK. I can't help it. I'm not going to stay here to be looked down on by everybody.

HAN. [*laying her hand on his shoulder.*] You wouldn't be, if——

ALECK. [*jerking away.*] Oh, yes I should.

LESLIE. You should have thought of that sooner. What you've got to do, now, is to sit tight and keep your mouth shut. We don't want everybody to know of this.

EUPH. Of course not.

MRS WALDIE *stops crying and listens eagerly.*

ALECK. [*eagerly.*] Do you mean—is father——

LESLIE. I haven't seen him yet, but of course he will. He's not a fool.

HAN. [*quietly.*] He won't, Aleck.

EUPH. If you'd only leave him alone !

MRS W. How can you be so selfish, Hannah !

LESLIE. Look here, Hannah, we're not going to have everything turned topsy-turvey just to suit your high-falutin notions. [*To ALECK*] The thing's going to be hushed up, Aleck. That's all there is about it.

ALECK. Do you think you can ?

LESLIE. Of course.

EUPH. Who's to know anything about it if we don't tell ?

ALECK takes off his overcoat and throws it on a chair.

HAN. Aleck, would you be satisfied to——

LESLIE. Oh, let him alone, can't you !

HAN. How dare you speak to me like that ! [*to ALECK.*] Would you be satisfied to let another man suffer in your place ?

ALECK. I—I don't know.

EUPH. Hannah's so desperately honourable—about Aleck.

MRS W. Oh, my dears, don't squabble, I'm sure Leslie's doing everything for the best.

EUPH. If Hannah would only let him. [*Going to ALECK.*] Don't bother about Hannah, Aleck. It was *my* ring, and if I choose to overlook it I don't see what business it is of hers.

MRS W. Quite right, my dear.

HAN. You're all trying to ruin him—body and soul!

WALDIE *comes in.* ALECK *gets as far out of sight as possible.* WALDIE *looks round enquiringly.*

LESLIE. Oh, how do you do, Mr Waldie. [*They shake hands.*] This is a bad business.

WALD. [*to HANNAH.*] Who's trying to ruin him—body and soul?

HAN. [*faltering.*] They say—they say it should be hushed up, father.

WALD. [*turning to LESLIE.*] You don't suppose we're anxious to publish it from the house-top, do you?

ALECK *listens eagerly.*

LESLIE. Of course not. That's just what I've been telling Hannah.

EUPH. But of course she wouldn't listen to it.

MRS W. She's so unfeeling.

HAN. Do you think so too, father?

WALD. Do I think what?

HAN. That Aleck should be spared at the expense of Mr Ross?

LESLIE. [*quickly.*] Of course we should have to compensate Ross in some way.

WALD. [*indignantly.*] Do you think I'm

going to let an innocent man suffer for Aleck's theft ?

LESLIE. He won't suffer. We're simply going to drop the thing. We can give him compensation.

WALD. Compensation for what ?

LESLIE. For keeping his mouth shut, of course.

WALD. Do you know that he's been turned out of the meetings—that there's a paragraph in the paper about it ? But of course you do. It must have come through you.

EUPH. He didn't get paid for the meetings, father. He told me so, himself.

WALD. Do you think money's the only thing in the world ?

LESLIE. No, we don't. That's why we think it's better to part with some in order to hush this up.

WALD. You seem very sure Ross will accept your "compensation."

LESLIE. Why shouldn't he ? He's not very well off.

EUPH. And he's not an angel either, although Hannah thinks so.

LESLIE. Of course it's rather a beastly thing, but what else can we do ? You can see him in

the morning. I don't think you'll have much difficulty in arranging it.

HAN. [*wheeling round suddenly.*] You'll see him to-night. I've sent for him.

LESLIE. Good Lord, Hannah!

ALECK *jumps up, and seeing them all engaged with HANNAH, picks up his coat and tries to slip out of the room.*

MRS W. Oh, how could you do such a thing! What are we to say to the man when nothing's been definitely settled?

WALD. [*uneasily.*] I wish you hadn't, Hannah.

HAN. He promised to help. I wanted Aleck to see him.

WALD. [*seeing ALECK.*] Where are you going? Put down that coat.

ALECK. I'm not going to wait and see Ross.

WALD. Put it down, do you hear!

ALECK *flings down his coat and slinks back to the fireplace.*

MRS W. [*facing WALDIE angrily.*] Oh, you're so hard and unnatural. No wonder we're all afraid of you.

WALD. Are *you* afraid of me, too?

MRS W. We all are—even Hannah.

HAN. [*going to ALECK.*] Aleck, dear——

ALECK. Oh, shut up, can't you!

MRS W. [*turning quickly to HANNAH.*] Leave your brother alone. Haven't you made enough mischief already?

LESLIE. Now that the fellow's to be here, you can see for yourself. I think you'll find he'll be quite open to reason.

WALD. [*angrily.*] Perhaps you'll kindly mind your own business and leave me to settle my family affairs myself.

LESLIE. But it *is* my business. My family must be thought of, too. You must remember I'm marrying your daughter.

WALD. There's no compulsion if you don't want to.

EUPH. [*angrily.*] There is! You never think of anyone but Aleck, I'm not going to be sacrificed for him. And what's Ross that you should make such a fuss about him? A thief! Leslie told you, and you believed it till Hannah got hold of you. It's all because Hannah's in love with the man.

HAN. Phemie!

EUPH. You know you are, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MRS W. Most unmaidenly, I call it.

WALD. That's enough. [*to LESLIE.*] If I thought Ross was open to bribery——

LESLIE. [*eagerly.*] He is, I'm pretty sure. Of course a little tact will be necessary——

JEANIE *shows* ROSS *in.* *There is an awkward pause.* HANNAH *plucks up courage and goes to him rather nervously.*

HAN. Oh, Mr Ross, I—I'm sorry I sent for you.

ROSS. [*with a quick glance round.*] Shall I go away ?

HAN. I think — perhaps — if you don't mind——

WALD. No. Now that you're here we'll see it through. The last time I saw you, Mr Ross, I accused you of stealing. You'll be glad to hear I know now that my son's the thief.

HAN. Father !

ROSS. Say rather, I'm sorry to hear there was a thief at all.

LESLIE. Of course you are. It's a beastly business for all of us. Naturally, we're very anxious to keep it to ourselves.

ROSS. [*dryly.*] Naturally.

WALDIE *draws aside and looks on, taking stock of Ross.*

LESLIE. Yes. So we think the best thing is to let the matter drop. Of course it's a bit rough on *you*. We quite realize that.

ROSS. On me? I'm afraid I don't quite understand.

LESLIE. I mean—about Mr Finlay, you know, and your meetings. But we'll set you up again—help you to start other meetings, or whatever you think best.

HAN. [*agitated.*] Will you stop!

WALD. [*to HANNAH.*] Let him have his say.

HAN. But, father——

WALD. Yes, yes, I know.

ROSS. [*confronting LESLIE with blazing eyes.*] Will you tell me in plain language what you're driving at?

LESLIE. [*drawing away a little.*] Oh, I think you understand, don't you? Of course it's Mr Waldie you'll have to settle with, not me.

EUPH. [*rather alarmed at ROSS's expression.*] Leslie, isn't it time we were off?

LESLIE. [*looking at his watch.*] By Jove, yes. Mother will be wondering what's become of me.

EUPHEMIA and LESLIE go toward the door.

WALD. Not so fast, please. You're making this man an offer in *my* name. Go on. Finish it.

ROSS. [*to LESLIE.*] I think you'd better not. I'm not a very patient man.

LESLIE. Oh, I've put it rather crudely, I

know. It's really a matter of—er—of mutual accommodation, that's all. Aleck's made a beastly ass of himself; but it seems a shame to spoil his whole life for a moment of—of temporary insanity, doesn't it?

EUPH. Mr Ross ought to be the first to see that.

MRS W. And I'm sure you're always telling people they should bear one another's burdens.

WALD. [*with bitter scorn.*] My God! It only remains for you to accept the offer, Mr Ross! I take it we *pay* our burden bearers.

HAN. Father! [*to ROSS.*] He doesn't mean it.

LESLIE. [*to HANNAH.*] Oh, be quiet. [*to ROSS.*] Take time to think it over, old man. [*He lays his hand on ROSS's shoulder.*]

ROSS. [*wheeling round furiously.*] Take your hands off me! [*LESLIE draws back in alarm.*] Your insults I can ignore; but if you lay your hand on me I'll not be answerable for what I do! [*He pulls himself up.*] You whited sepulchre! I'd rather stand in Aleck's shoes than yours!

LESLIE. [*firing up.*] Who are you speaking to like that——

EUPH. [*catching LESLIE by the arm.*] Come away, Leslie.

LESLIE. I think it's about time! [*He goes to the door, EUPHEMIA following.*]

WALD. [*to EUPHEMIA.*] Where are you going?

EUPH. With Leslie, of course.

WALD. Are you going home with him?

EUPH. We're going to the Empire, if you *must* know.

EUPHEMIA and LESLIE go out.

WALD. Good God! Now, Mr Ross, we'll settle this up—*my* way. You've been accused of my son's theft. He'll clear you, if it has to be done in the police court.

MRS W. [*putting her arms round ALECK.*] Oh, my boy, my poor boy!

ALECK. [*jerking away.*] Leave me alone, will you!

MRS. W. [*appealing to ROSS.*] You're a minister of the gospel. You can't ruin my boy and break his mother's heart.

ROSS. [*shocked.*] I never thought of such a thing, Mrs Waldie. I came to help your son, not to ruin him.

MRS. W. [*eagerly.*] You're going to help us to hush it up.

WALD. I won't have that.

ROSS. [*ingratiatingly.*] I think I've a right to some say in the matter.

MRS W. He has, John. You know he has.

WALD. No one has a right to bring discredit on my name.

ROSS. I don't intend to. Have you asked your son if *he* does?

WALD. [*bitterly.*] Can he discredit me any more?

ROSS. Oh, surely. [*He goes to ALECK and claps both hands on his shoulders.*] Aleck, old man, you've heard——

ALECK. [*drawing away sullenly.*] Oh, you needn't think you're going to get round me like that. I know you think I'm a bounder.

ROSS. Rubbish, man. Don't let your self-reproach run away with you.

ALECK. Who said anything about self-reproach?

MRS W. Aleck, dear, if Mr Ross is going to take the blame——

ALECK. He's not.

MRS W. Oh, my dear boy——

ROSS. Why isn't he?

ALECK. You know jolly well father wouldn't let you.

ROSS. [*eagerly.*] He *shall* let me—if *you* want me to.

WALD. I'll do nothing of the kind.

HAN. Wait, father !

ROSS. [*to WALDIE.*] You will—if Aleck says so ?

WALD. [*after some hesitation.*] Well—have it your own way.

MRS W. [*to ROSS.*] Oh, thank you, thank you. I'm sure if we can make it up to you in any way——

WALD. Be quiet, Mary.

ROSS. Well, Aleck, which is it to be ?

ALECK. Oh, you know it doesn't make any difference. If I let you, you'd think me a bigger boulder than ever.

ROSS. It doesn't matter what I would think. The question is, what would you think, yourself ?

ALECK. [*after a struggle.*] What do you want me to do ? Go to the police ?

ROSS. Not at all. Can't you think of any other way ?

ALECK. If I—if I went to Mr Finlay, would you go too ?

ROSS. Gladly.

ALECK. Well—I'll go.

ROSS. [*joyfully.*] Good man !

HANNAH goes to ALECK and gives his hand a little squeeze.

MRS W. [*aghast.*] But I don't see why he should go to Mr Finlay at all.

WALD. Fortunately, Aleck does.

ROSS. Can't you see, Mrs Waldie——

MRS W. [*interrupting sharply.*] No, I can't. I can only see you've tricked Aleck into doing exactly what you pretended you were going to save him from.

HAN. Mother dear!

MRS W. Oh, I know it's no use *my* saying anything. None of you will ever listen to me. But Leslie said it should be hushed up, and how is it to be hushed up if Aleck's sent round telling everybody? We shan't be able to look people in the face.

WALD. Would you rather your son was a coward than a man of honour?

MRS W. I'd rather it was hushed up, and it could have been, quite well. And I don't see why Mr Ross should get off and Aleck have to take all the blame.

HAN. Mother! Mr Ross hasn't done anything.

MRS W. Oh, of course *you* say so. But there's no use *my* saying anything. I can't stand any more—I can't bear it. [*She bursts into tears and goes out of the room.*]

WALD. [*distressed.*] Go to your mother, Hannah.

HAN. [*doubtfully.*] Ye-s, father.

ALECK. Better not. She'll be all right directly. It's not as if she had to go to old Finlay herself.

WALD. Do you think so, Hannah? [*She nods.*] Well—[*He shrugs his shoulders.*]

ALECK. [*to ROSS.*] Shall we go now?

ROSS. [*surprised.*] Won't to-morrow do?

ALECK. No. To-morrow, I mightn't want to go.

ROSS. Very well then. We'll go at once.

ALECK goes to get his coat.

WALD. Aleck. [ALECK turns to him sheepishly.] Can we—can't we—begin again, Aleck?

ALECK. [*hanging his head.*] I—I suppose so.

WALD. [*gripping his hands.*] Oh, my boy, my boy!

ALECK. [*shamefaced.*] Don't, father.

ALECK picks up his hat and coat. WALDIE turns to ROSS.

WALD. I can never tell you how much I am in your debt. But you'll understand.

ROSS. [*lightly.*] Oh, you don't owe me anything. I'm only the instrument.

WALD. Huh! [*He turns away.*]

ROSS. Good-night, Miss Waldie.

HAN. But you'll come back with Aleck, won't you?

WALD. [*wheeling round.*] Of course you will.

ROSS. [*hesitating.*] I thought you'd rather be—by yourselves.

HAN. [*impulsively.*] But you'll be one of ourselves.

ROSS. [*eagerly.*] Do you mean that, Miss Hannah?

HAN. (*a little confused.*) Of course.

ROSS. I'll come back.

WALD. [*gripping ROSS's hand.*] I'm glad.

ROSS. Thank you. [*gaily.*] Come on, Aleck.

ROSS and ALECK go out.

WALD. That's a good man, Hannah. No claptrap about him.

HAN. Yes, father.

HANNAH sits on the couch. WALDIE moves about uneasily.

WALD. Your mother said you were all afraid of me. I suppose *you* are, too?

HAN. [*rather taken aback.*] I—I was. [*She gets up.*]

WALD. But now you find I'm so easily hood-winked you think you can afford to despise me?

HAN. Do you think so?

WALD. Why shouldn't I?

HAN. You *have* cause. But it wasn't altogether *our* fault. You've always been so—unapproachable. But now——

WALD. Don't think I'm going to change. I'm too old for that—too set in my ways.

HAN. I don't think I'd like you to change. Only to—to understand.

WALD. I've been more unjust to you than any of the others. Why don't you hate me too?

HAN. [*quickly.*] Aleck doesn't hate you, father.

WALD. [*shaking his head.*] He lost his head, this afternoon, and the truth came out.

HAN. It wasn't the truth. It was himself he hated, not you.

WALD. I wonder? This has been a bit of a shake up, Hannah, for me. I want you to—to help me.

HAN. Father! [*She goes to him. He takes her in his arms.*]

CURTAIN.

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